

## MONTHLY ACTIVITY REPORT

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

DATE: July 30, 2003  
REPORT FOR: **June 2003**  
DCN: USFWS-AZFRO-PT-03-013  
ACTIVITIES:

**General**

Leslie Thompson was converted to permanent status as AZFRO's Budget Analyst/Administrative Officer. Congratulations Leslie.

Mark Brouder continued his detail in the Washington Office, working on the "Management Analysis" of the Service's Management Assistance Program as part of the overall Fisheries Program strategic planning.

The AZFRO-San Carlos YCC (Youth Conservation Corps) began work. Dewey Wesley is the Crew Leader and crew members include Lois Lorenzo, Tara Kitcheyan, Dustin Boni, and Jeff Aday. Funding for the program came from the RO (Regional Office) Division of Endangered Species. We look forward to the work this crew will help us accomplish.

Rob Simmonds reviewed, made final edits, and distributed a report entitled "Ecosystems for the Future: An Assessment of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Ecosystem Approach." The report is a team project that was completed as part of the Stepping Up To Leadership program. While the program ended some time ago, the team that Rob was a part of (included eight participants from across the nation) continued to work on their team project until the report was finalized and ready for distribution outside of the program.

Stewart Jacks, with help from the rest of the Pinetop staff, put on the Regional PF&W (Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program) Meeting in Pinetop. Special thanks to Leslie Ruiz for setting up the projects tour, Leslie Thompson for making meeting arrangements, and Shelley Simmonds for meeting arrangements and helping participants set up their presentations. Participants included 45+ people from the four state region, the Service's Washington Office, the DOI, the Secretary of Interior's office, congressional staffers, AGFD (Arizona Game & Fish Department), WMAT (White Mountain Apache Tribe), and the San Carlos Apache Tribe.

R. Simmonds participated in a Gila-Salt-Verde Ecosystem Team Meeting. The primary purpose of the meeting was to prioritize proposals for Flex-Funding.

Thompson continued working on budget issues including submission of FY2004 AZFRO budget projections to the RO and continuing to work on FY2003 budget issues.

All AZFRO employees participated in a staff meeting call. A variety of topics including credit card use, safety, ethics training, pesticide applicator training, travel, and budget issues were discussed.

Jacks, with assistance from several completed AZFRO's FY2002 Annual Report. Special thanks to S. Simmonds and L. Thompson for printing and binding the copies and to Jennifer Fowler-Propst and R. Simmonds for reviewing the report. If you want a copy please let us know.

Mid-year performance evaluations were completed for all AZFRO staff.

R. Simmonds, Brenda Brouder, Pam Sponholtz, M. Brouder, Doug Jann, Ruiz, and Jacks participated in a work planning conference call. The purpose of the call was to coordinate work schedules (staff, equipment, etc.) among the four AZFRO offices for the coming months.

### **Outreach**

Ruiz presented two papers entitled "Recovery Status of Apache Trout: Overview of the Apache Trout Recovery Program" and "Application of Fintrol® for the Recovery of the Apache Trout" to the Fisheries, Wildlife, and Sensitive Species divisions of the WMAT-WORD (White Mountain Apache Tribe - Wildlife and Outdoor Recreation Division) in preparation of a presentation to the WMAT Tribal Council for Tribal approval of Fintrol® use on reservation streams.

Sponholtz, along with Shaula Hedwall, AESO (Arizona Ecological Services Office) - Flagstaff, provided an overview of the native fish and habitat issues associated with the Fossil Creek decommissioning project to a group volunteering to trap crayfish along the creek. In addition, they showed the group how to identify the fishes in Fossil Creek by snorkeling and did some preliminary frog surveys along the lower part of the creek near the Irving Facility.

### **AZFRO-Pinetop**

The Pinetop staff participated in the monthly Fishery Coordination meeting among AZFRO, AWC NFH (Alchesay/Williams Creek NFH), Pinetop FHC, & WMAT-WORD .

Ruiz, Tom Ensmann, and Daniel Parker, with assistance from WMAT-WORD staff, completed the habitat survey and began the electrofishing survey on Flash Creek, FAIR (Fort Apache Indian Reservation). This is part of a basin-wide Apache trout population status survey.

Jacks participated in a Trout Unlimited hosted Apache Trout Workday. Efforts were concentrated on crayfish control.

Ruiz, R. Simmonds, and Jacks met with Alex Puglisi and Tim Gatewood (WMAT-WORD) to discuss NEPA for certain projects on FAIR as well as the need for a cooperative agreement between AZFRO and the Tribe.

Ruiz, in cooperation with Marty Jakle and Kris Randall (AZ PF&W), worked with Director John Welsh and Doreen Gatewood (WMAT, Tribal Historic Preservation Office) on the Geronimo's Cave Bat Gate PF&W project and Tim Gatewood and Travis Clarkson (WMAT-WORD) on the Big Bonito Creek and Little Bonito Creek Barrier Reconstruction PF&W projects. Ruiz also worked with Syliva Cates (WMAT Attorney) regarding the PF&W agreement, Exhibit A, and HABITS language and Mary Jo Stegman regarding the Intra-Service Section 7 consultation. After completing this she submitted approved agreements for the Tribal Chairman's signature.

Parker collected Apache trout specimens from Rock Creek (FAIR) for genetic testing of purity.

Ruiz worked with Bill Almquist, WMYC (White Mountain Youth Corps) and drafted a Memorandum of Understanding between the Service and the WMYC for implementation of Apache trout recovery activities.

Ruiz and Jacks participated in a conference call for the TU (Trout Unlimited) - National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant for Apache trout recovery. The group identified priority projects for this year's funding. Other participants included Joe McGurrian (National TU), Fred Filmore (OPTU), Jerry Ward, USFS (U.S. Forest Service), Amy Unthank (USFS Regional Fishery Biologist), Scott Gurtin (AGFD), Tim Gatewood (WMAT-WORD), and Travis Clarkson (WMAT-WORD).

Ruiz and Jacks hosted an "Apache Trout Partners" meeting. The group discussed allocation of National Fish & Wildlife Foundation grant funds for Apache trout restoration on the Apache Sitgreaves National Forest and the Fort Apache Indian Reservation. In attendance were partners from the Service, TU, USFS, AGFD, WMAT, and the White Mountain Youth Corps. Recovery project updates were provided for the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest and the FAIR (renovations, surveys, barrier constructions, habitat assessments, etc.), the TU Work Day schedule was revisited, priority projects were identified, and Don Duff, USFS/TU Liaison provided a presentation on the "Trout in a Fridge" instream incubator technique.

Ruiz, R. Simmonds, and Jacks met with John Caid, Alex Puglisi, and Tim Gatewood (WMAT-WORD) on the development of an MOU with the Tribe for Apache trout recovery implementation.

Parker and Ensmann conducted backpack electrofishing and habitat survey techniques training to WMAT-WORD and WMYC staffs.

Ruiz worked with Tim Gatewood (WMAT-WORD) to develop a schedule for field personnel for creel surveys, water quality collection, and Apache trout habitat and fish surveys for the remainder of the summer.

Ruiz developed a "Water Quality Collection Protocol" to guide the collection and use of water quality data by AZFRO, A/WCNFH, and WMAT-WORD for fish stocking for the recreational fishing program on the FAIR.

Parker and Ensmann conducted a fishery survey of Christmas Tree Lake (FAIR).

Ruiz met with John Caid (Director, WMAT-WORD) regarding a number of topics including, evaluation of the tribal recreational fishing program, Apache trout recovery activities, tribal approval of distribution of AZFRO reports, and creel surveys.

#### **AZFRO-Parker**

Mitch Thorson conducted the water quality projects at Alamo and Painted Rock reservoirs. This project is an ongoing contract that this office has had with COE (Corps of Engineers) for twenty years and involves collecting water quality information at Alamo Lake and Painted Rock reservoirs. The samples are sent to a COE lab where they are analyzed and the data are returned to this office where it is collated and sent to COE for their files.

Chuck Minckley and R. Simmonds participated in a conference call to discuss revisions to the Lower Colorado River Basin Management Plan for big river fishes. This plan is designed to implement the Recovery Goals for razorback sucker, bonytail, humpback chub, and Colorado pikeminnow, all endangered species that are native to the Colorado River. A draft of the plan is scheduled to be released from the RIPS WG (Recovery Implementation Planning Scientific Work Group) to the Service's Regional Director for Region 2 in August.

Jann, with assistance from Ty Wolters and Chris Phelps, USBR (Bureau of Reclamation), completed water quality and fish monitoring surveys in Unit 3 of the DU2 ponds at Imperial NWR. The DU2 ponds are the second Native Fish Protected Habitat to be developed by USBR, in cooperation with the Service and Ducks Unlimited. Although some water quality parameters such as conductivity, pH, and dissolved oxygen, are approaching critical biological extremes, the razorback suckers that were stocked there on March 27, 2003 continue to survive and grow.

Thorson and Minckley sampled one pond at the Hualapai Native Fish facility near Peach Springs. This facility received 2000 razorback sucker fingerlings three years ago to see if they could successfully raise the fish. They collected 468 razorbacks, the 107

fish >30 cm TL were pit tagged and released into Lake Mojave and the rest were returned to the pond for further growth.

Thorson, Minckley, and Thornbrugh completed the bonytail broodstock collecting effort on Lake Mojave. This was a five-week effort beginning in April to collect larger (>40cm) bonytail for possible inclusion in the broodstock at Dexter NFH&TC. One large bonytail was captured in early May and transported to Willow Beach NFH where it currently resides. USBR provided several people for help on this project.

Jann, with assistance from Chris Phelps (USBR), finalized the construction of fish containment screens, which are to be used for partitioning the four units of the DU2 ponds at Imperial NWR. Water management objectives at the ponds had been postponed for several months due to delays in completing the screens, and due to delays in assembling the water delivery system. Persistent low water levels in the ponds had led to deterioration of water quality and extensive development of aquatic plants. However, the system was activated on June 24, and the 39-acre pond complex will receive 120 acre-feet of well water by July 10.

Thornbrugh has been conducting predation experiments at the Achii Hanyo facility. This is part of a USGS contract which is examining the effect of predation on two sizes of razorback suckers by a variety of non-indigenous animals. To date bullfrog tadpoles, crayfish, bluegill, and fathead minnows have been used in the experiments.

Minckley and Jann participated with a group to develop a Biological Review for Havasu NWR. The group made recommendations for future refuge management goals and activities. Participants included personnel from refuges, the RO, AESO, USBR, AGFD, and BLM. Topics covered a wide range of refuge management issues, including water management for Beal Lake, the first of several Native Fish Protected Habitats presently under development by the USBR and the Service. R. Simmonds reviewed Minckley's write up for Havasu NWR Biological Review.

R. Simmonds reviewed the Lake Havasu and Lake Mojave "Roundup" reports.

Minckley participated in the USGS/Lower Colorado River Ecoteam sponsored meeting about the lower Colorado River, held in Parker at the Bluewater Casino. Several presentations were given on a wide range of topics including sediment deposition patterns in Grand Canyon, spatial distribution of birds in various vegetation types, and conditions present in the Colorado River Delta. There were also several discussions about lower river conditions. Participants included staff from USGS, USBR, AGFD, BLM (Bureau of Land Management), Colorado River Indian Tribes, and Cocopah Indian Tribe, and the Service.

Jann completed data entry from water quality and fish monitoring surveys conducted during May and June at Beal Lake and the DU2 ponds.

Minckley participated in a Lake Havasu Fisheries Improvement Project meeting. Updates were given about native fish activities as they related to the project and the ongoing activities leading to the development of the CAP-peninsula site which will be dedicated in December 2003. Participants included AGFD, California Department of Fish & Game, BLM, and the Service.

R. Simmonds reviewed management plan for backwater habitats on the lower Colorado River.

Minckley responded to a request from Bob Pitman (R2 ANS Coordinator) regarding a report of the invasive plant Giant Salvinia on Havasu NWR. Minckley, the refuge biologist, and Jill Wick (botanist, Bill Williams River NWR) investigated the report. They did not find any salvinia plants.

Jann participated in a conference call with representatives from the Service (RO, AESO, & Imperial NWR), and USBR to discuss funding considerations and study protocol of a proposed hydrological survey of McAllister Lake on the Imperial NWR. McAllister Lake is one of several sites proposed for development as a Native Fish Protected Habitat. However, the water quality in the lake is presently unsuitable to support native fish. The USBR is conducting activities to investigate the feasibility of improving water quality by pumping off surface water and allowing the lake to refill through groundwater seepage. Dr. Guay (USBR) is proposing a thorough evaluation of groundwater quality and dynamics in the area surrounding McAllister Lake and the adjacent portion of the Colorado River. Jann later met on site with Dr. Guay, the manager at Imperial NWR, and USBR's project representative to discuss site logistics.

### **AZFRO-San Carlos**

Dewey Wesley repaired the S1 weir at Bylas Springs, SCAR (San Carlos Apache Reservation). The Bylas Springs contain the endangered Gila topminnow.

M. Brouder along with other Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance and National Fish Hatchery System staff attended and staffed demonstration tables at the National Boating and Fishing Week "Kick Off" Youth Fishing Day event held at the Constitution Gardens pond in the National Mall.

The YCC crew worked on several projects including salt cedar control at Bylas Springs.

Wesley conducted water quality and angler surveys at several SCAR lakes.

M. Brouder reviewed a draft report prepared by Ruiz entitled "Population Estimation of Apache Trout, *Oncorhynchus apache*, in Streams on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation, Arizona." The report contains current population estimates of Apache trout in 12 streams located in the White Mountains of eastern AZ. Along with current population estimates, the report contains an evaluation of the current sampling protocol

and its feasibility of future use by all agencies involved in Apache trout recovery. When completed, the report should contribute greatly to the planning for and conducting of long-term monitoring of this species. Ruiz incorporated comments and revisions to the Apache trout population estimation report.

M. Brouder prepared an article entitled "The San Carlos Lake Fishery: Booming? Or Busting?" for distribution in local newspapers. The article briefly summarizes results from annual spring sampling of the San Carlos Lake fishery conducted by AZFRO and SCR&WD (San Carlos Recreation and Wildlife Department) personnel.

Wesley assisted Steve Noline (SCR&WD) with locating a collared mountain lion in the Ash Creek and Warm Springs area of the SCAR. This is part of mountain lion telemetry project being conducted by the SCR&WD.

M. Brouder completed a Final Report entitled "Spring 2003 Fishery Surveys of Select Fort Apache Indian Reservation Recreational Fishing Lakes." This report summarizes data collected by AZFRO and WMAT-WORD personnel from five of 13 recreational fishing lakes located on the FAIR. The primary objective of these surveys was to evaluate the existing fish communities within each lake. The report also contains recommendations that should assist the Tribe in evaluating and enhancing their Recreational Fishing Program, for the continued benefit of Tribal and non-Tribal members. R. Simmonds reviewed the report.

Wesley with assistance from Steve Noline (SCR&WD) conducted a fishery survey of Dry Lake (SCAR). They captured large numbers of golden shiners that were supposed to have been removed from the lake.

M. Brouder reviewed a draft Navajo FMP (Fish Management Plan) prepared by Dennis Stone, which when completed, will contain goals and objectives for future native and sport fish conservation and management on the Navajo Nation. In addition, the Navajo FMP will contain the actions necessary to successfully achieve the stated goals and objectives.

Wesley, with assistance from SCR&WD staff, stocking rainbow trout in several SCAR lakes. The trout were surplus fish from AGFD.

M. Brouder continued his detail in the Washington Office working on a "Management Analysis" of the FWMA (Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance) component of the Fisheries Program. The goals of the "Management Analysis" are to 1) define, describe, and analyze the full scope of activities at FWMA offices and the resource accomplishments resulting from those activities, 2) document changes over time in the types of activities performed and identify differences among Regions, and 3) provide recommendations for effective performance measurement by FWMA offices and for enhancing consistency among Regions. Much easier said than done. Mark has also had the opportunity to engage in other activities such as: attending a Senate Sub-

committee hearing on Tribal Natural Resources, FWMA Program, Activity Based Costing, FY 2005 DOI Budget Briefing, and developing a "Fact Sheet" capturing FWMA Program activities and accomplishments with regards to Tribal Assistance.

M. Brouder participated in a monthly Western Division AFS, Western Native Fishes Committee conference call. Mark is Co-Chair of the Western Native Fishes Symposium Committee that is planning a Western Native Fishes Symposium for the 2004 Western Division AFS Annual Meeting in Salt Lake City, UT. The symposium is one component of a larger AFS sponsored project that is being undertaken to assess the status of all known freshwater native fishes of western North America, with the exception of anadromous salmonids (which has been previously addressed). For further information regarding this project, please contact Mark.

### **AZFRO-Flagstaff**

The AZFRO-Flagstaff crew moved into new temporary office space.

Sponholtz & Dennis Stone completed the logistics for the upcoming Chute Falls Reconnaissance trip. The objectives of this trip are to collect water quality, investigate current fish densities above Chute Falls, and locate helicopter land sites for a subsequent fish transfer in late July. Sponholtz worked with the GIS department at GCMRC to get detailed landstat photos of the LCR (Little Colorado River) above Chute Falls. Netting locations can be written directly on these maps for later entry into the Fish database.

B. Brouder began working with Sponholtz on the "Arizona Watershed Prioritization and Program Strategy." Completion of this project will provide an index of biotic integrity used to rank Arizona's watersheds according to their conservation potential. These rankings will provide guidance for AZFRO's future conservation efforts based on habitat, imperiled and/or native species, and local community activity for each watershed.

R. Simmonds, Dennis Kubly (USBR), and Norm Henderson (National Park Service) met with the Navajo Nation to discuss a comprehensive action plan for endangered humpback chub in Grand Canyon. This plan is being developed by an ad hoc subcommittee of the AMWG (Adaptive Management Work Group) in response to declining trends in humpback chub abundance in Grand Canyon. The LCR in Grand Canyon is home to a large number of humpback chub and is also their principle spawning site. Much of the LCR is on the Navajo Nation, and it is important to keep the Tribe informed and to address any concerns they may have. A number of projects in the plan were discussed, and the Tribe expressed interest in reviewing future drafts of the plan. In addition to meeting with the Navajo Nation, Simmonds participated in an ad hoc subcommittee conference call to continue work on the plan.

Randy Van Haverbeke completed the final draft of the report entitled "The Feasibility of Developing a Program to Augment the Population of Humpback Chub (*Gila cypha*) in Grand Canyon." R. Simmonds reviewed the final draft of the report. This report was developed by AZFRO at the request of the AMWG in response to declining trends in endangered humpback chub populations in Grand Canyon. Augmenting the population is one of the options being discussed/considered to arrest the decline.

Stone dissected various humpback, bonytail, and roundtail chubs to collect information on their alimentary tracts. The humpback chub were LCR-CR mortalities or ones that died in captivity, the bonytail chub were given to us by Dexter NFH&TC, and the roundtail chubs were preserved specimens from NAU (Northern Arizona University). This information was needed to finish a manuscript concerning the reliability between two different gastro-intestinal lavage techniques on detecting piscivory in *Gila* species.

R. Simmonds worked with Willow Beach NFH and USGS to coordinate a humpback chub transmitter study.

B. Brouder completed a literature search for AZFRO-Flagstaff.

Sponholtz set up two 10 gallon aquaria to test dosage of MS222 and handling methods for injecting elastomer dye. In July, 300 humpback chub will be captured near the confluence of the LCR and the Colorado River and be translocated 14km upstream. All fish will be given an elastomer tag so monitoring efforts can distinguish translocated fish from those already present in downstream sections. A surrogate species, red shiner, will be used to test dosage and injection sites.

Van Haverbeke analyzed data and wrote trip report for humpback chub monitoring activities in the LCR during spring 2003. The trip report includes two trips conducted 31 March to 11 April 2003 and from 28 April to 9 May 2003.

Sponholtz, along with the AGFD and NAU, sampled several areas of the Verde River near Camp Verde to obtain young-of-year red shiners for elastomer dye implantation and dosage experiments. Some shiners will also be used for a laboratory flood simulation in progress by the Biology Graduate Program at NAU.

Van Haverbeke participated in a mainstem Colorado River trip as a cooperating fisheries biologist to monitor the mainstem aggregations of humpback chub.

Sponholtz reviewed and commented on the draft Management Plan for the Big River fishes of the Lower Colorado River Basin and returned comments to Minckley.

Van Haverbeke participated in the Ad Hoc meeting for humpback chub in Phoenix. This meeting was to develop management actions for the conservation of humpback chub to present to the AMWG.

Sponholtz and B. Brouder worked on the Watershed Prioritization Project, including creation of GIS landownership covers, refining the metric criteria using Naturserve definitions, and obtaining additional covers from Arizona Land Resource Information System.

Stone checked the May 2003 LCR fishery data for accuracy.

### **Training**

S. Simmonds completed Ethics training.

Thompson completed the NCTC “Financial Transaction Processing” course.

Sponholtz completed the NCTC “Mechanics of Supervision” and “Dynamics of Supervision” courses.

Minckley completed Arizona Certified Pesticide Applicators renewal training.

All AZFRO employees who had not previously taken the mandatory IT Security Awareness Training completed it this month.

R. Simmonds completed the mandatory DOI-MOCC refresher training.

Leslie Denney participated in IDEAS training in the RO.

Minckley completed sexual harassment training.