

SOUTHWEST TRIBAL FISHERIES COMMISSION

SWTFC News

Summer 2018

Making a Difference



J. Mazzone, Chair; A. Ringia, Vice-Chair; S. Whiteman, Secretary-Treasurer; S. Leon, Exec. Director

From The Chair



Jacob, holding a healthy roundtail chub (*Gila robusta*), on the banks of the Navajo River.

This past summer seemed to just keep going. Normally, one would be thinking about fall trout fishing and big game hunts. Instead, it was like July would never end. From my office window I now can see the high country where the aspen are beginning to change, and the oaks are slowly turning orange. These ever so slight visual cues are the only indication of fall here in Northern New Mexico. As we continue to be stricken with “exceptional” drought in the southwest, it is difficult not to begin thinking about snow and winter. We absolutely need a healthy winter.

The sure-fire way for me to know it was a long and successful summer is to now look at the state of my hands and the number of new holes in my waders needing repair. The holes in the waders this year were well earned and many of them are associated with positive memories. A few, however, came with curses and bruises.

It's easy at the end of the field season to look at the equipment in my truck and see additional battle scars, duct tape riddled, loose and broken electrical fittings and dirty disheveled gear all waiting for some much-needed TLC. Of course, this time of year is also when I notice that I, personally, am disheveled and some of my bolts might be slightly stripped as well. These feelings can be hard to shake after a tough spell, especially when some of the slight aches and pains might actually need medical attention. As meeting season is now upon us, one wants to look and feel their very best before being folded away into clean button ups and PowerPoint presentations for the winter.

This edition of our newsletter is much anticipated as an official record of another successful season for the SWTFC. Between multiple youth programs, a highly successful fisheries techniques workshop and a fully stacked fisheries break out session at the NAFWS regional meeting, the Commission is firing on all cylinders. There is no sign of this momentum slowing. Of course, we can always strive to do more and do it better. I implore you all to continue to participate in and contribute to Commission meetings with presentations, newsletter articles you find important to share or simply one that might make us smile. Even a photo of your favorite project or fish would be welcome. I encourage you to not only continue, but to expand your participation and become more active. There is amazing work being conducted by our membership every day and the group as whole can learn from these everyday natural resource successes.

Jacob Mazzone

Chairman Southwest Tribal Fisheries Commission

San Carlos Apache Tribe Hosts Successful Fisheries Techniques Workshop

Despite occurring during three of the warmest days (think...really hot!) on the Upper Sonoran Desert, the SWTFC's 2018 Fisheries Techniques Workshop was an overwhelming success, in large part due to efforts by the San Carlos Apache Tribe extending a welcoming environment for both classroom and field venues. Also contributing significantly were the SWTFC's partnerships with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program and National Conservation Training Center, the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society -- Southwest Region, and Bass Pro Shops. The cadre of workshop instructors represented a who's-who of skilled educators and practicing Federal and Tribal fisheries biologists, and attendees to the workshop brought the necessary energy and enthusiasm needed to enhance the learning experience.



Esteemed Instructors: (Left to Right) Chris Kitcheyan, FWS's New Mexico Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office; Wyatt Doyle and Jeremiah Smith, FWS's Columbia Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (Missouri); Dr. Alan Temple, FWS's National Conservation Training Center; Jacob Mazzone, Fisheries Biologist, Jicarilla Apache Tribe; and, Blanche Hooke, Fisheries Biologist, San Carlos Apache Tribe. Not pictured, Zach Jackson and Chase Ehlo, Fisheries Biologists, FWS's Arizona Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office.

More than 30 students representing 11 tribes throughout the Southwest descended on San Carlos for the three-day workshop in July. With Blanche Hooke moderating, the event began in a special way. San Carlos Apache Tribal Chairman Terry Rambler provided welcoming remarks, along with Tribal Council Member Simon Hooke, and Director of San Carlos Recreation and Wildlife Department Tim Stevens. Richard Christian, retired FWS, and Thomas Carlew, General Store Manager for Bass Pro Shops in Mesa, Arizona, also provided welcoming remarks. Mr. Carlew distributed personal gifts provided by Bass Pro Shops for each of the participants.



Dr. Allen Temple, FWS's National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, WV, veteran teacher and world-renowned authority on electrofishing, provides classroom instruction during the first afternoon of the SWTFC Fisheries Techniques Workshop.

Of course, the most intriguing and exciting part of any natural resources workshop is the excursions to the field. The San Carlos Apache Reservation offered the attendees two amazing field venues for fisheries instruction – Talkalai Lake, and the Blue River. Class participants were divided into two groups, each visiting one or the other of the field venues on two consecutive days. Despite the onerous July heat of the desert environment, the students eagerly emersed themselves in the field learning experiences provided to them.



Some of the eager workshop participants line up before departing for the first morning of field events in front of one of the electrofishing boats. Temperature at this early time was only in the 80's.

Blue River

With its native fish fauna largely intact, and its cool waters and beautiful riparian areas a rarity on the parched landscape of the Upper Sonoran Desert in July, the Blue River offered the perfect teaching venue for stream fisheries instruction.



Taking refuge from the heat, Cody Lanyate, Zuni Tribe; Cody Gokllsh, White Mountain Apache Tribe; and, Andrea Martinez, Walker River Paiute Tribe, enjoy the amazing riparian area offered by the Blue River, San Carlos Apache Reservation.



Instructors Jacob Mazzone and Dr. Allen Temple, prepare the stream electrofishing barge to demonstrate yet another way to effectively sample stream fish populations.



Instructor Chris Kitcheyan (center with hat) takes a group of students backpack electrofishing in the Blue River. Rosenberg Tafoya, Jicarilla Apache Tribe Fisheries Technician, follows the efforts closely behind.

Talkalai Lake



Scenic Talkalai Lake was the venue for lake operations in the 2018 Fisheries Techniques Workshop. Unlike the Blue River, shade on and around this environment was limited, and the surrounding mountains limited breezes that might have helped cool off class participants. Did anyone care? No sign of that, as students were introduced to both passive and active fisheries collection techniques, including boat electrofishing, trammel netting and gill netting, as well as hoop netting and fyke netting techniques. Capturing big fish made it fun!



Zach Jackson, in charge of the FWS's Arizona Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office's electrofishing boat, instructs class participants on safety before collecting fish on Talkalai Lake.



While field operations were the highlight of the workshop, participants were well-versed in a number of technical subjects that are not taught as formal curriculum in colleges and universities. These topics included habitat and species awareness, such as lotic, lentic, substrate and structure, as well as pelagic, benthic, diurnal, nocturnal and crepuscular considerations. Additional expert instruction covered environmental variables for sampling including flow, turbidity, temperature, debris, and vegetation. Significant time was invested in understanding waveforms, voltage and amperage settings, and the influence of conductivity. Net repair and development of data forms was also covered in detail. Finally, safety was always a paramount subject covered with class participants.

“On behalf of the San Carlos Recreation and Wildlife Department, we are happy to have had the opportunity to host this year’s Fishery Workshop! We are happy that participants were able to gain the wide range of knowledge and experience from working on the lake with sport fish surveys, to the river with native fish population surveys. Thanks to all participants and instructors!” ...Blanch Hooke, Fisheries Biologist, San Carlos Recreation and Wildlife Department.

SWTFC Youth Internships End on High Note with Presentations at Native American Fish and Wildlife Society – Southwest Regional Conference in Ignacio, Colorado

As detailed in the SWTFC Spring Newsletter, several Commission member tribes successfully initiated education and employment opportunities in natural resource conservation for their youth in 2018. A partnership with the U.S. Forest Service’s national office and Southwest regional office provided funding necessary to implement youth internships on the Southern Ute Indian Reservation and on the Mescalero Apache Reservation. Funding for an additional youth internship program with the Zuni Tribe was provided by the SWTFC.

In August, each of the youth interns was provided an opportunity to speak about their work experiences during a forum at the NAFWS-Southwest Regional Conference. Each of the interns expressed their gratitude for being introduced to professionals in the natural resource arena, and a few stated that they were now reconsidering their future career opportunities in favor of jobs in conservation.



SWTFC Executive Director Leon moderates the USFS/SWTFC youth internship panel presentations. Accompanying Leon on stage are Cody Cloud and speaker Marcy Begay (SUIT/San Juan NF Interns), Matias LaPaz (MAT/Lincoln NF Intern), and Cody Lanyate (SWTFC/Zuni Fish and Wildlife Dept. Intern). Dominic Yuselew (SWTFC/Zuni Fish and Wildlife Dept. Intern) not pictured.

Mescalero Tribal Hatchery Continues Facility Enhancements

In an effort to increase trout production, rear better-quality fish in a controlled environment and remove unwanted and harmful pathogens, and be better able to predict harvest schedules, staff at MTFH worked with staff of the FWS's Mora National Fish Hatchery to install a recirculating aquaculture system (RAS) in the secondary tank house that was sitting dormant on the hatchery grounds.

Following a June planning visit by Nathan Wiese, Hatchery Manager for Mora NFH, the MTFH played host to Mora NFH biologists Daniel Gallegos and Grant Langmaid and electrician Richie Garcia for a week in July. The Mora staff assisted in the installation of the RAS in what is now called the recirculation tank house (RTH). The team added biofilters, screen filters, pumps, blowers, a sump tank, PVC plumbing, and 11 circular tanks with a capacity of 625 gallons each.

In August, the MTFH staff added exhaust fans to the RTH to help keep the indoor environment cool during the summer months. The hatchery plans to introduce trout to the new system in December.



Jicarilla Apache Nation Awarded Desert Fish Habitat Grant: Amargo Creek Connectivity and Habitat Enhancement

The Jicarilla Apache Nation was awarded Desert Fish Habitat Partnership (DFHP) funding (DFHP) for its “The Amargo Creek Connectivity and Habitat Enhancement” proposal in 2018. The goal of the project and the DFHP as an organization is to “*Reverse declines in quality and quantity of desert fish habitats to improve overall population status of desert fishes and other aquatic organisms, as well as increase the quality and quantity of fish habitats that support a broad natural diversity of desert fishes and other native aquatic species.*” The Nation is incredibly excited to be ranked and awarded DFHP funding.

Restoring connectivity to the middle reach of Amargo Creek with the main stem of the Navajo River will enhance instream habitats to support spawning, rearing, and foraging activities and further the establishment of healthy native fish populations. Previous work to re-introduce beavers into the middle reaches of Amargo Creek has allowed large pool development and perennial water downstream to the confluence with the Navajo River. The project intends to remove barriers and impediments to fish movement between the main stem Navajo River and the beaver ponds.

Upon completion, an approximate 50% increase in available river miles become available to fishes in the watershed and this project is the largest possible native fish repatriation area available on the Nation’s lands.

Other Happenings in the Southwest

- The FWS’s New Mexico FWCO, in collaboration with the Alchesay-Williams Creek National Fish Hatchery Complex, will be coordinating with New Mexico Tribal partners to schedule the fall distribution of rainbow trout. New Mexico FWCO will be contacting tribes to request water quality readings of their tribal lakes and advise them of the distribution schedule.
- The Conservation Agreement for Rio Grande chub and Rio Grande sucker was finalized in September 2018. The conservation agreement was developed as a collaborative and cooperative effort among state and federal agencies, tribal entities, and other stakeholders, to provide a framework for the long-term conservation of RGC and RGS in Colorado and New Mexico. Implementation of this agreement is intended to reduce or eliminate threats that may warrant RGC and RGS being listed as special status species by state and federal agencies or listed under the ESA. Two tribes signed on as signatories of the plan, Jicarilla Apache Nation and Pueblo of Santa Ana.
- Jacob Mazzone and Steve Whiteman, on behalf of their respective tribal employers (Jicarilla Apache and Southern Ute), as well as representing the SWTFC, attended the first annual *Colorado River Basin Recovery Coordination Meeting* on September 25-26 in Grand Junction Colorado. The meeting was attended by various fisheries leaders from USFWS and numerous southwestern states. Discussions revolved around better inter-agency coordination on native species conservation, recreational fish stocking policies, ESA challenges, improving stakeholder participation (especially tribes), and planning for future annual meetings.

SWTFC Officers

Chairman: Jacob A. Mazzone, Fisheries Biologist, Department of Game and Fish, Jicarilla Apache Nation; email Jacob.a.mazzone@gmail.com, phone 575-759-3255

Vice-Chairman: Adam Ringia, Director, Environmental and Natural Resources Department, Laguna Pueblo; email ARingia@lagunapueblo-nsn.gov, phone 505-552-7512

Secretary-Treasurer: Steve Whiteman, Division Head, Wildlife Resource Management, Southern Ute Indian Tribe; email swhitema@southernute-nsn.gov, phone 970-563-0130 ext. 2413

SWTFC Staff

Executive Director: Stuart C. Leon, Ph.D.; email stuartcleon@gmail.com, phone 505-217-8815

MTFH Manager: Shelley Battiest; email apacheplume1@yahoo.com, phone 575-464-8768

MEMBER TRIBES

Jicarilla Apache
Mescalero Apache
Navajo Nation
Northern Ute Tribe
Oh-Kay Owingeh
Pueblo of Cochiti
Pueblo of Isleta
Pueblo of Laguna
Pueblo of Nambe
Pueblo of Picuris
Pueblo of Sandia
Pueblo of Taos
Pueblo of Zuni
Pyramid Lake Paiute
San Carlos Apache
Santa Clara Pueblo
San Ildefonso Pueblo
Southern Ute Tribe

Upcoming Events and Opportunities

SWTFC Quarterly Meeting, **November 15**, 2018, BIA Southwest Regional Office, Albuquerque