

SOUTHWEST TRIBAL FISHERIES COMMISSION

# SWTFC News

## Fall 2017

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*Making a Difference*



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

## From The Chair



Jacob and Gila

### Looking Forward

The New Year is a time for reflection on past projects and accomplishments as well as a time for looking forward with anticipation. Of course it is also the time to put the finishing touches on annual reports, budget requests, and last minute work plan scheduling.

The Commission is looking forward to a promising 2018. One very exciting prospect is the SWTFC Fisheries Techniques Workshop which is the most anticipated continuing education program (CE) for regional Tribal fisheries staff in recent memory. Very few fisheries CE opportunities exist nationally and none (that I'm aware of) have such a regionally specific curriculum or such dedicated

professional instructors. Please see page 5 for more details and how to get involved in this awesome opportunity!

Fisheries concerns of the Southwest are most likely going to be similar this year as in previous. Drought will be looming, new species of concern may arise, and water issues abound but that will not slow the SWTFC efforts nor should it impede yours. If we are always looking forward, while taking the time to look back and learn from past experiences we can only further our professional experience and skillset, making each new challenge easier to overcome.

2018 is the time to participate, stay (or become) active in conservation issues of significance to you and your community, make your voice heard, and to continue to protect and conserve fisheries resources throughout the Southwest. Every year one should set their sights high, cherish with pride the victories, and accept with dignity the defeats, but always, always while looking forward.

*Jacob Mazzone*

Chairman Southwest Tribal Fisheries Commission



## New Face at Taos Pueblo



### Talisa Ortega

Talisa is excited to be the new Biology Specialist for the Taos Pueblo, Division of Natural Resources. Originally from Rio Rancho, NM, she attended school in Denver, CO at Regis University. Talisa completed her undergraduate work in 2012, and has worked with wildlife in some shape or form ever since. She has completed stints with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish in Ruidoso, NM, the Bureau of Land Management in Alamosa, CO, and with Marron and Associates Environmental Consulting in Albuquerque, NM.

Talisa looks forward to working with various game species on Taos Pueblo, and undertaking a new stream assessment project identifying critical habitat and barriers to Rio Grande cutthroat trout. If there is any

spare time and sunlight outside of work projects, Talisa tries to spend it snowboarding or flyfishing. Welcome Talisa! The SWTFC is excited for you and stands ready to assist in any way possible with your new work opportunity.

## Familiar Face in Mescalero Apache Nation



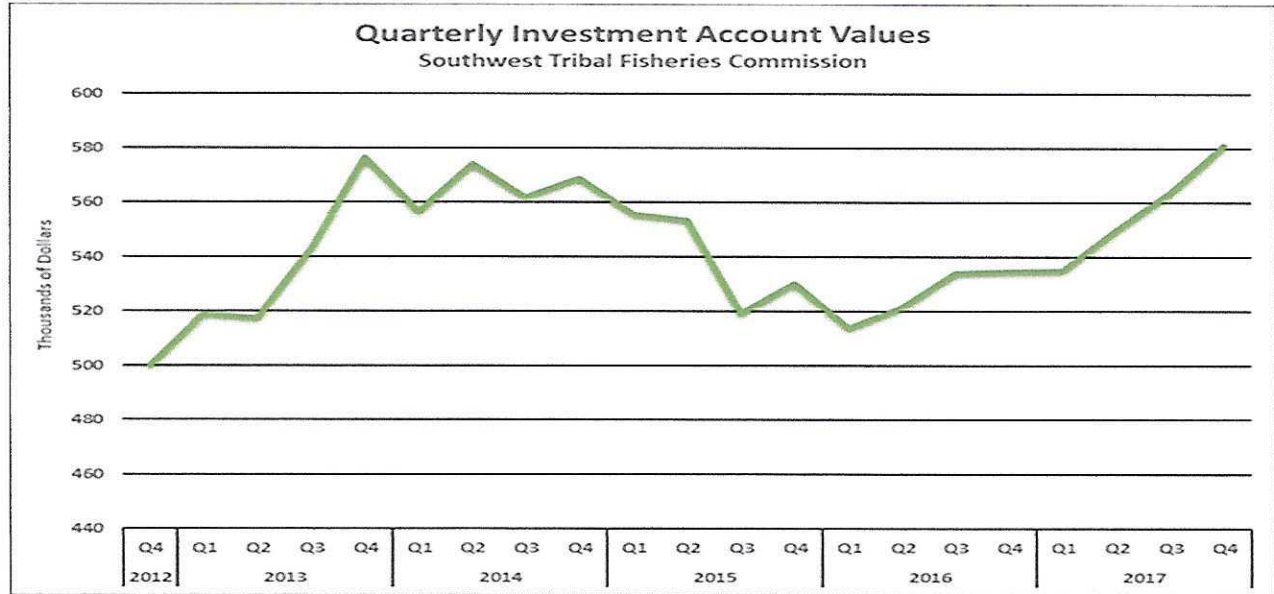
### Arthur "Butch" Blazer

Congratulations to SWTFC friend Butch Blazer on his recent victory in the Mescalero Apache Tribe's election for President. In a recent phone interview with SWTFC Executive Director Leon, President Elect Blazer expressed his support for the SWTFC, and his desire to look for expanded and strengthened opportunities to work with the SWTFC. He encouraged Leon to put together a package to present to the Mescalero Tribal Natural Resources Committee, wherein the SWTFC would ask for a recommitment to funding of our still active 638 contract with the Tribe. President Elect Blazer also discussed the myriad things he wants to

accomplish for the Mescalero Apache people, and the number of opportunities to increase collaboration with outside entities that can make life better for all Mescalero Apaches. He also committed, as a soon-to-be Tribal President, to enduring support for ONR (Our Natural Resources), a consortium of Tribal natural resource professionals that support the needs of Indian Country.



## 2017 a Good Year for SWTFC Investment Fund



One of the major assets of the Southwest Tribal Fisheries Commission is its investment fund. Currently standing at over \$550,000 in value, the fund was built-up over time following the re-opening of the Mescalero Tribal Fish Hatchery in 2004. Portions of revenue from the sale of hatchery fish to Commission member tribes were set aside by the Commission for the expressed purpose of building an endowment that would one day completely fund the operation of the hatchery in perpetuity.

The endowment concept was a vision shared by the Commission and members of the Mescalero Apache Natural Resources Committee. Part of this vision was to reach a point where the hatchery could provide free recreational fish stocking for southwest tribes – similar to what was happening for decades when the hatchery was operated by the Federal government under its trust responsibility to tribes. The targeted seed amount for the endowment was \$1 million. Although the vision of the endowment was never fully achieved, major progress on the fund was made over many years of fish sales.

In 2012, the fund reached a significant milestone with a balance of \$500,000 spread over a combination of the Commission’s regular bank accounts, as well as a mature certificate of deposit (CD). The Commission determined that the best way to protect and take advantage of this accumulated wealth was to place all of the funds in an investment account to be managed by the firm Edward Jones. The initial (and only) deposit made into this fund was exactly \$500,000 in November 2012. Working closely with Edward Jones, the Commission has maintained an aggressive, diversified investment strategy in order to maximize gains in interest. And in keeping with the earlier vision of an endowment, the Commission relies on the fund for a single purpose only – supporting the continued operation of the Mescalero Tribal Fish Hatchery. The

Commission makes only a single annual distribution from the fund, and no other Commission expenses are paid using the fund.

Although the fund has never exceeded much more than \$580,000 in total value, it's important to remember that significant distributions of 4% of fund value are made each January. These annual distributions are an important part of the 10-year agreement, signed May 2013, between the Commission and Mescalero Apache Tribe on the continued operation of the hatchery. 95% of each distribution is paid to the Mescalero Apache Tribe, while 5% remains with the Commission. In the five years since the establishment of the fund, the payments made to the Tribe have averaged \$21,222, and totaled just over \$106,000. Due to the current strong economy and stock market, the fund is currently at an all-time high, and the upcoming payment to the Mescalero Tribe will be the highest in five years at \$22,089.

Those Commission members who are interested in learning more about the Commission's investment fund, how it is managed, and the importance of this fund to the partnership with the Mescalero Apache Tribe should contact Commission Secretary-Treasurer Steve Whiteman.

## **MTFH Continues Exceptional Customer Support to SWTFC Tribes**



**New egg hatching tray stacks at MTFH.**

During the fall period of September 21 through December 21, 2017, MTFH delivered 13,200 pounds of rainbow trout averaging 10 to 13 inches in length. SWTFC member tribal operations receiving fish included Sandia Lakes (6,300 pounds), Isleta Lakes (2,100 pounds), Nambe Pueblo (2,100 pounds), San Carlos Apache Reservation (2,100 pounds), and Mescalero Apache Inn of the Mountain Gods (720 pounds).

The Mescalero Apache Tribe had recently invested in new egg hatching trays when the MTFH received 220,000 rainbow trout eggs from the Fish and Wildlife Service's Ennis National Fish Hatchery, Ennis, Montana, on December 8, 2017.

The eggs hatched on December 20 with a higher than anticipated survival rate. The excellent survival rate is in no small way attributable to the continued professional growth of hatchery employees and the new, dependable egg hatching trays.

The fall 2017 period also saw the completion of new office accommodations for MTFH staff in the tank house. The staff is excited about the newly renovated office space, and with encouragement from SWTFC Chairman Jacob Mazzone, is "looking forward" to continued success in 2018.



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## SWTFC Announces 2018 Fisheries Techniques Workshop



Boat electrofishing collected this largemouth bass in San Carlos Reservoir.

The 2018 Fisheries Techniques Workshop will occur during the period **July 23 – 26, 2018**, and will be hosted by the **San Carlos Apache Tribe**, Arizona.

This exceptional continuing education opportunity is sponsored by the SWTFC, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program; National Conservation Training Center; and Native American Liaison's Office), Bureau of Indian Affairs Southwest Region, Native American Fish and Wildlife Society-Southwest Region, and Bass Pro Shops.

Instructors for the Fisheries Techniques Workshop represent a Who's-Who of practicing fisheries professionals from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Southwestern Tribes. The workshop will introduce participants to three basic considerations: 1) identifying the necessity to collect fishery data; 2) constructing and performing a valid sampling protocol; and, 3) summarizing data collected to best inform tribal decision makers.

In-depth, practical hands-on training will be provided to workshop participants in both passive and active collection techniques used in lake and stream environments. These techniques will include, at a minimum, boat and backpack electrofishing, seining, gill netting, and fyke netting.

The workshop is offered at no charge, except for participant's morning and evening meals, and lodging. Lunches will be provided at no cost for attendees. Stipends will be available to help defray costs associated with attendance.

The workshop will be an exciting educational and training opportunity and we hope you will choose to participate. Come and learn from some of the best instructors the Nation has to offer! **Look for registration materials in the next few weeks.**

Who Should Attend: Tribal Fish and Wildlife Biologists, Natural Resource Managers, and Conservation Officers.



## **SWTFC Executive Director Leon Receives Bass Pro Shops 2017 Conservation Partner of the Year Award**



**Johnny Morris, Founder and CEO of Bass Pro Shops, presents Stuart Leon with 2017 Conservation Partner of the Year award at a ceremony in Springfield, MO, on December 18, 2017. Photo Credit: Bass Pro Shops.**

In a holiday ceremony with more than 2,000 Bass Pro Shops and Bass Tracker associates in attendance at the company's headquarters in Springfield, Missouri, founder Johnny Morris announced the Bass Pro Shops 2017 Conservation Partners of the Year. Two conservation partners were recognized: Jimmy Carter, 39<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, and Stuart Leon, Executive Director of the Southwest Tribal Fisheries Commission. The annual awards are given to individuals who exemplify ideals of conservation leadership and complement Bass Pro Shops mission to inspire people to enjoy, love, and conserve the great outdoors.

According to Bass Pro Shops Media office, past winners of the award include Ray W. Scott, founder of the Bass Anglers Sportsman Society (B.A.S.S.); Bill Dance, of the "Bill Dance Outdoors" television show; John Anderson, country music artist; Missouri Governor Jay Nixon; Missouri First Lady Georganne Nixon; Collin O'Mara, President and CEO of the National Wildlife Federation; Jeff Trandahl, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation; Rob Keck, National Wild Turkey Federation; Richard Childress, Richard Childress Racing; Bob Ziehermer, Director of the Missouri Department of Conservation; Dale Hall, CEO of Ducks Unlimited; and George H.W. Bush, former President of the United States.





In his acceptance address, Leon brought greetings from the Southwest, and thanked Johnny Morris for his affinity for the well-being of Native Americans, the Nation's first conservationists. He likened the approach that Johnny takes to conserve the future of the world's natural resources to the seven generation stewardship concept in Indian Country, which urges the current generation to live and work for the benefit of the seventh generation hence.

Since 2014, Leon has been actively engaged in assisting Johnny Morris with Bass Pro's recognition of the legacy of Native Americans in the conservation of our nation's natural resources. These efforts have included review of the Native American artifacts and messaging in the Ancient Ozarks Museum of Natural History at Top of the Rock, and review of exhibits in the Native American gallery in the Wonders of Wildlife National Museum and Aquarium in Springfield, Missouri.

## Upcoming Events and Opportunities

BIA RFP deadline is this Friday, **January 12, 2018!!!**

AFS/TWS Arizona/New Mexico Joint Annual Meeting, **February 2-3, 2018**, Flagstaff, Arizona

SWTFC Annual Meeting, **April 3, 2018**, BIA Southwest Regional Office, Albuquerque, New Mexico

SWTFC Planning Meeting for Fisheries Techniques Workshop, **April 4, 2018**, BIA Regional Office, Albuquerque, New Mexico

NAFWS Annual Meeting, **May, 2018**, Rhode Island – *Stay tuned for further details*

NAFWS Southwest Region Summer Youth Practicum, **June 18-22, 2018**, Rio Mora National Wildlife Refuge, New Mexico

SWTFC Fisheries Techniques Workshop, **July 23-26, 2018**, San Carlos Apache Reservation, Arizona

NAFWS Southwest Region Conference, **August 7-9, 2018**, Ignacio, Colorado/Southern Ute Tribe



**SWTFC Officers**

Chairman: Jacob A. Mazzone, Fisheries Biologist, Department of Game and Fish, Jicarilla Apache Nation; email [Jacob.a.mazzone@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:ARingia@lagunapueblo-nsn.gov), phone 505-552-7512

Secretary-Treasurer: Steve Whiteman, Division Head, Wildlife Resource Management, Southern Ute Indian Tribe; email [swhitema@southern-ute.nsn.us](mailto:swhitema@southern-ute.nsn.us), phone 970-563-0130 ext. 2413

**SWTFC Staff**

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MTFH Manager: Shelley Battiest; email [apacheplume1@yahoo.com](mailto: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

Comments? Suggestions? Relevant information for future newsletters should be directed to the Executive Director.