

SOUTHWEST TRIBAL FISHERIES COMMISSION

SWTFC News Spring 2017

Making a Difference



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



Fish Health Workshop

The Southwest Tribal Fisheries Commission (SWTFC), in collaboration with the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society-Southwest Region, U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs- Southwest Region, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Division of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, National Conservation Training Center, and Native American Liaison's Office, sponsored a highly successful Tribal Fish Health Workshop during April 20-21 at the Mescalero Apache Indian Reservation.

Course Leader Matthew Patterson, National Conservation Training Center, helped workshop participants navigate a curriculum that included a case study of bacterial kidney disease (BKD), an overview of many other fish pathogens and diseases that might occur in the Southwest, hatchery and field biosecurity and preventive measures, an afternoon of hands-on anatomy and necropsy experience, and a tour of the Mescalero Tribal Hatchery. Seven highly experienced U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) fish disease scientists from throughout the Nation provided informative and interactive lectures and laboratory oversight. A featured highlight of the workshop was an outdoor barbecue and luncheon provided by the Mescalero Conservation Department and Mescalero Tribal Fish Hatchery Staff.

Twenty-Five workshop participants, representing nine Southwestern Tribes and Pueblos, two government agencies, and one non-governmental agency were the beneficiaries of the high quality, two-day training event. The SWTFC will continue to collaborate with our partner agencies and non-profits to bring important training opportunities to our member Tribes in the future.



Dr. Susan Gutenberger, Fish Health Specialist, Pacific Region, FWS, provides a case study of bacterial kidney disease (BKD). Nelson Luna, Director of the Zuni Fish and Wildlife Department, listens attentively. Photo Credit: Angela James, NMFWCO FWS



The fish anatomy and necropsy laboratory exercise was a favorite among workshop participants. Dissection and microscopic examination of slide mounts was directed by the seven Fish Health Specialists and Course Instructors. Photo Credit: Angela James, NMFWCO FWS

SWTFC Presents Investment Fund Check to Mescalero Tribe

Following the closure of the FWS's Mescalero National Fish Hatchery in 2000, the Mescalero Apache Tribe and the SWTFC joined forces in 2004 to restore fish production at the hatchery – now the Mescalero Tribal Hatchery. A strong partnership developed between the Tribe and the SWTFC, and numerous tribes throughout the Southwest once again benefitted from this important source of recreational fish.

On May 3, 2013, the Mescalero Apache Tribe and the SWTFC entered into a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that recognized the partnership's mutual interests in sustaining the operation of the Mescalero Tribal Hatchery for the benefit of Southwestern tribes. Both parties committed to continuing this partnership in a stable, long-term, and financially sustainable manner, where the benefits of fish production are shared equitably between the Mescalero Apache Tribe and the member tribes of the SWTFC.

To ensure the partnership is underpinned in a financially sustainable manner, the SWTFC maintains an investment fund with the Edward Jones Investment Firm. As prescribed in the MOU, beginning in January 2014 and on an annual basis thereafter, four percent of the Fund's total value reported at the end of the previous calendar year is distributed. Ninety-Five percent of this total distribution is paid to the Mescalero Tribe exclusively for labor related expenses tied to the operation of the Hatchery, while the remaining five percent is retained by the Commission for its discretionary use.



SWTFC Executive Director Dr. Stuart Leon presents Vice-President Aguilar with the 2016 interest check from the SWTFC investment fund. Photo Credit: Steve Whiteman, SWTFC Secretary-Treasurer

On April 20, 2017, Mr. Gabe Aguilar, Vice-President of the Mescalero Apache Tribe, was gracious enough to provide welcoming remarks to attendees of the Fish Health Workshop. His appearance provided the SWTFC an opportunity to present the 2016 investment fund check of more than \$20,000 to the Mescalero Apache Tribe. These distributions are an important foundation in the continued partnership between the Tribe and the SWTFC.

On the second day of the Fish Health Workshop, Mr. Aguilar was able to attend the outdoor barbecue and luncheon sponsored by Director Cervantes, the Mescalero Conservation Department Rangers, and Mescalero Tribal Hatchery Staff.

Shade Structure Construction Underway at MTFH



Ongoing construction of shade structures on outdoor raceway banks A and B at the MTFH. Photo Credit: Director Tyner Cervantes, Mescalero Conservation Dept. and Tribal Hatchery

Following the BKD positive finding during the routine spring fish health inspection in 2016, and an ever-growing threat to rainbow trout production from an increasing great blue heron population that was feasting on hatchery fish each day, the SWTFC decided it was time for action.

The SWTFC invested in six 80'x20' steel cold frame structures and 70% shade cloth coverings. Soon, no more heron predation, and better biosecurity of the captive-reared rainbow trout at the Mescalero Tribal Fish Hatchery!

MTFH Disease Classification Raised from BKD+ to BKD Suspect

Following the finding of BKD in the rainbow trout at MTFH in 2016, SWTFC member tribes and pueblos were confronted with miscommunication, misinformation, and stress – all related to adapting to this somewhat novel fish disease in the Southwest. To make matters worse, the FWS’s Alchesay-Williams Creek NFH Complex in east-central Arizona also tested positive for BKD. As a consequence, tribal natural resource programs dependent on rainbow trout stockings from these hatcheries were jeopardized, as well as financially imperiled.

While we are still not “out of the woods”, disease testing this spring conducted by the FWS’s Southwest Native Aquatic Resource and Recovery Center in Dexter, New Mexico, resulted in a negative finding for any fish disease at MTFH. The hatchery’s classification has been raised from BKD+ to BKD suspect. Hopefully, after another year of negative results, the MTFH will regain its Class A status.

Director Tyner Cervantes, Hatchery Manager Shelley Battiest, Assistant Hatchery Manager Tori Marden, and all of the hatchery staff worked diligently throughout 2016 and early 2017 to add, improve, faithfully practice, and maintain biosecurity measures at the MTFH. Congratulations!!

Ford F-150 Raptor Finds a New Home at MTFH

Agencies that partner with the SWTFC occasionally find that their otherwise perfectly good vehicles no longer fit the agencies’ criteria for continued operation. These instances provide the SWTFC and its member tribes the opportunity to acquire these excess agency vehicles. Much appreciated!



Ford F-150 Raptor that will soon be on its way to MTFH. The truck has been donated to the Mescalero Apache Tribe by the FWS’s Kyle Todd, Senior Wildlife Officer, Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge. Photo Credit: USFWS

Employee Spotlight: James Runningwater

Sometimes when an organization needs talent and expertise in the worst way to help meet its obligations, the exact right person for the job comes along. Such is the case with James “Jimmy”



Runningwater and the MTFH. Jimmy is the new and permanent fish delivery driver for the MTFH. A member of the Mescalero Apache Tribe, his career has been as diverse as it has been fascinating.

Jimmy retired after 29 years of service in support of numerous Target Management Office contracts, many of which were conducted at White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico. His expertise and professional title revolve around being an FAA Certified Aircraft Mechanic, Remote Control Operator, and supervisor. As a DOT CDL driver, he has owned

and operated Runningwater Wildland Firefighting Equipment, which included a 7,000 gallon helicopter dip tank and a 4,000 gallon water truck. He is proud of his association with many brothers in the wildland fire fighting circle.

Now, life for Jimmy has come full circle. He has made it back to the Mescalero Tribal Fish Hatchery, where he spent time as a young person involved in summer youth programs. Jimmy is active in traditional ceremonies, and aside from his titles of CDL fish delivery driver and fisheries technician, he holds the more important titles of husband, father, and grandfather.

Photo Credit: Shelley Battiest, MTFH Manager

Hidden Heroes

The SWTFC expresses deep appreciation to the following individuals for their contributions to our many successes this spring:

FWS: Linda Friar, Richard Christian, Matthew Patterson, Karene Motivans, Nate Wiese, Jason Woodland, Dave Hampton, Dr. Susan Gutenberger, Angela James, Ken Phillips, Lacey Hopper, Joe Early, Scott Aiken, Stewart Jacks; **BIA:** Joseph Jojola, Norman Jojola; **NAFWS-SW:** Elveda Martinez, Darren Talaumtewa; **Mescalero Apache Tribe:** Gabe Aguilar, Tyner Cervantes, all the Conservation Agents, Shelley Battiest, Tori Marden, Jessica Rodriguez, John Salazar, Houston Fatty, Ian Murphy