**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**

# Accomplishment Report

The **Alpena Fishery Resources Office (FRO)** is located in Alpena, Michigan and works to meet U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fishery and Ecosystem goals within Lake Huron, Western Lake Erie, and connecting waters of the St. Marys River, St. Clair River, and Detroit River. Activities include Aquatic Species Conservation and Management, Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management, Cooperation with Native Americans, Leadership in Science and Technology, Partnerships and Accountability, Public Use, and Workforce Management – all of which are conducted in alignment with the Service Fisheries Program Vision for the Future. The station is one of many field offices located within Region 3, the Great Lakes Big Rivers Region.

# Aquatic Species Conservation and Management

## Alpena FRO Tags Lake Whitefish Again (Year 2 of 3)

***Submitted by Aaron Woldt***
***Fishery Biologist***

From November 8 to11 staff from the Alpena Fisheries Resource Office (FRO) participated in a USFWS Restoration Act funded Lake Huron lake whitefish distribution study. Service staff involved included Treaty Unit Coordinator Aaron Woldt, Project Leader Jerry McClain, Fishery Biologists Adam Kowalski, Scott Koproski, Susan Wells, Jim Boase, and Anjie Bowen, and Fish and Wildlife Biologist Heather Enterline. Staff conducted all tagging operations on the commercial trap-net boat the Blonnie W operated by Jim Presau Fisheries.

The goals of this study are to determine the spatial distribution and movement patterns of 8 selected lake whitefish stocks in Lake Huron and to determine the contribution of each stock to commercial fishery yields. The 8 stocks selected for this study are Detour, Alpena (Middle Island & Thunder Bay), Saginaw Bay, Burnt Island, South Bay mouth, the Fishing Islands, Douglas Point, and Sarnia. From 2004 to 2006 1,500 lake whitefish will be tagged annually at each of the sites, except for Alpena and the Fishing Islands where 3,000 fish will be tagged annually at each site. In all, 7 state, federal, tribal, and provincial partner agencies will be participating in this study. In 2004, study partners tagged and released a total of 12,520 lake whitefish in Lake Huron. The Service tagged 1,481 lake whitefish in 2004. To date, approximately 350 tagged lake whitefish have been harvested and reported by Lake Huron fishers.

In 2005, Service staff successfully Floy tagged and released 1,540 lake whitefish near Middle Island. Service staff also tagged and released an incidentally caught lake sturgeon as part of an ongoing Lake Huron lake sturgeon monitoring study. Michigan DNR staff tagged approximately 1,500 lake whitefish in Thunder Bay in November, 2005. Tagged fish were measured for length, checked for lamprey wounds, sexed, assessed for maturity, scale sampled for ageing purposes,

fin clipped, and released. A random subset of fish were also detained shortly prior to release to measure short term tag retention and handling mortality. Approximately 200 fish were lethally sampled and processed as well.

Data from this study will be entered into a common database maintained by the Alpena FRO. A combined database with all 2004 data was built by Woldt and distributed to study partners in November. Combined study data, including 2005 tagging, will be distributed to study partners early in 2006.

Studying the spatial distribution and movement patterns of lake whitefish stocks will allow managers to determine if the borders of current management units are biologically meaningful and to determine the contribution of each stock to the commercial fishery. This will allow for better harvest management and protection of lake whitefish stocks. This outcome is consistent with the Service's goal of maintaining self-sustaining populations of native fish species under the "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" priority of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

# Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management

## Greendocks- A Demonstration Site on Indian River

***Submitted by Heather Rawlings***
***Fish and Wildlife Biologist***

Partners for Fish and Wildlife Biologist Heather Rawlings met with the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council (Watershed Council) representative Jennifer Geld and Tuscarora Township (Township) Clerk Diane Hahn in Indian River, MI on November 8 to view and discuss the "Greendocks" project. In 2003 the Cheboygan County Road Commission donated a strip of riparian property on the Indian River to Tuscarora Township. This site has been used by locals as a swimming hole and illegal docking site for small boats traveling through the "Inland waterways" connecting Burt, Mullet, and Black Lakes. The 340 foot strip of riparian property is stabilized by an ageing steel seawall. The seawall is deteriorating, and due to road run-off a section of the riparian land is rapidly eroding into the river. The goal of the Township is to keep this area accessible as a swimming and docking area, control erosion, and provide in-stream habitat for walleye, yellow perch, panfish and possibly spawning habitat for an inland population of lake sturgeon. Once adjacent landowners see the benefits- both aesthetic and environmental- of the restoration effort it is our hope and belief that they may consider similar projects along their properties.

The Service and Watershed Council are working with Township officials and engineers to design a site exclusively using natural materials such as field stone, large woody debris, and native vegetation to restore aquatic habitat at the site, yet provide for community needs as well. Local landowners have raised $40,000 to restore the site, and the Township has agreed to match these funds. Rawlings applied for Service funding through Private Lands Fish Habitat Restoration funds, and the Watershed Council is pursuing funding as well. Early estimates for the project place costs at approximately $110,000. Construction will take place during the summer of 2006.

A 340 foot stretch of riparian and in-stream habitat along the Indian River will be restored in the summer of 2006 to benefit warmwater and coolwater fish species, including an inland population of lake sturgeon. Completion of aquatic habitat restoration projects contribute toward the "Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management" component of the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

## Potential Fish Passage for 2006

***Submitted by Susan Wells***
***Fishery Biologist***

On November 1st, Biologist Wells submitted six full proposals for the US Fish and Wildlife Service fish passage program. Included in those proposals were five dam removals, three in Ohio and two in Michigan, and one culvert replacement in Michigan. All of the projects were identified as priorities by state agencies and other partners. Restoring fish passage at the six sites would result in approximately 110 river miles opened to fish movement for spawning, rearing, and foraging.

This is an example of collaboration between federal and state agencies and NGOs to enhance aquatic habitat which will benefit fish and wildlife resources. These projects have the ability to enhance fish passage of native fish species within the many watersheds. This effort addresses the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future priority of Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management, and Partnerships and Accountability.

# Partnerships and Accountability

## St. Marys River Lake Sturgeon Project Funded

***Submitted by Scott Koproski***
***Fishery Biologist***

During the month of November, fishery biologist Scott Koproski received notification from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation that his proposal was selected for funding. The project titled *Lake Sturgeon Tracking Study in the St. Marys River* is scheduled to take place during the 2006 field season. Partners on this project are Lake Superior State University, Bay Mills Indian Community, and the Soo Area Sportsman.

The intent of this project was to capture lake sturgeon in the St. Marys River using baited set-lines. Lake Superior State University has been successful in recent years capturing lake sturgeon in this system using this technique. Once a fish is captured, biological data will be collected from each fish and fish that are designated by researchers as adults will have a sonic telemetry tag surgically implanted for tracking purposes. Upon relocating fish using the sonic telemetry gear, an underwater camera will be deployed for habitat characterization. Since very little is known about the lake sturgeon population that utilizes the St. Marys River, we hope to obtain a variety of information including: age/length/weight relationships, movement tendencies, spawning/feeding habitats, and population estimates.

Once the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation notified Biologist Koproski that he was successful in securing funding, he began working on the Budget and Phasing Document. This document was required by the Foundation prior to funds being released. The purpose of this document was to identify where funds will be spend and allow the Foundation to track monies released for this project.

This project is an example of Alpena FRO's commitment to the following Fisheries Vision Priorities: Partnerships and Accountability and Aquatic Species Conservation and Management.

# Public Use

## Students and Service Biologists Compare and Contrast Research Techniques

***Submitted by James Boase***
***Fishery Biologist***

Fishery Biologist James Boase traveled to Monroe, Michigan on 3 November 2005 to present information about fishery research taking place in the Huron Erie Corridor (waters connecting lakes Huron and Erie). Approximately 40 students, faculty and staff from Monroe Public Schools met at the Bolles Harbor Mathematics and Science Center (Center) and were shown a 30 minute Power Point presentation and introduced to some of the sampling gear that is used to sample various species of fish, plants, and invertebrates in the Corridor.

The Center is located on over twenty acres of both upland and wetland areas and has two ponds that are used for research purposes. Both ponds support a number of native fish species,

amphibians, aquatic insects, plants, and numerous waterfowl species. Research and sampling techniques that the students have been employing on the ponds was compared and contrasted with those utilized by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and its partners. Throughout the presentation students were presented numerous hypothetical "problems" that biologists face during typical field studies.

Following the presentation students were provided with an opportunity to handle and test the sampling gear and ask questions about careers in the Service. Most of the students that attend classes at the Center are juniors and seniors taking advanced classes and are interested in pursuing careers in fields of mathematics and science. Literature about careers in the Service was provided to each of the students and the school. The forum was an excellent opportunity to explain how the Alpena FRO is working with researchers from various state and federal agencies, local communities, along with private citizens in an effort to rehabilitate this region of the Great Lakes.

This presentation provided an excellent opportunity to explain to the public how the Service and its partners have been working to rehabilitate aquatic habitats and restore native fish species in the Huron Erie Corridor. This effort provided a unique opportunity to create new partnerships. This meeting is consistent with the Public Use, Partnerships and Accountability, Aquatic Species Conservation and Management, and Leadership in Science and Technology focus of the Fisheries Program's Vision for the Future.

# Workforce Management

## Canopy Will Keep Alpena FRO Staff Out of the Weather

***Submitted by Adam Kowalski***
***Fishery Biologist***

During the months of September and October, Fishery Biologists Adam Kowalski and Scott Koproski organized the purchase and construction of an aluminum canopy for the station's Tribal Unit vessel. This purchase was made possible with end of the year funds provided by the regional office. Kowalski and Koproski obtained three estimates from manufactures and visited each welding shop to design a canopy that would effectively keep Alpena FRO staff out of the elements. The design of the canopy had to protect staff from the elements and not hinder work to be done. The design chosen extended the windshield vertically and added a ten foot roof over the deck of the vessel. Vertical support posts where strategically placed to eliminate interference while lifting gill net and anchors into the vessel during the independent lake whitefish sampling and other projects.

The purchase of the canopy complies with the Work Force Management objective of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future to provide employees with access to facilities and equipment needed to effectively, efficiently, and safely perform their jobs.

**Alpena FRO Accomplishment Report**
**November 2005**

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For more information on Alpena FRO programs and activities or to view other station reports visit our website located at http://www.fws.gov/midwest/alpena/.