



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

La Crosse Fish Health Center

April 2012 Monthly Highlights

The La Crosse Fish Health Center (LFHC) is located in Onalaska, Wisconsin and is responsible for fish health management within the Big Rivers/Great Lakes region of the upper Midwest. Primary responsibilities include inspection, certification and diagnostic services for federal hatcheries, providing inspection and laboratory services for state, federal and tribal agencies, surveillance of target pathogens as part of the National Wild Fish Health Survey, providing training in fish health management, monitoring use of drugs and chemicals for national fish hatchery use, researching fish health management and assisting in design and implementation of surveillance, and control of invasive aquatic pathogens in cooperation with state, tribal, federal and non-governmental agencies.

Aquatic Species Conservation and Management

Annual Tribal Fish Hatchery Inspections

by Corey Puzach

In April, Corey Puzach and Terrence Ott traveled to the Red Cliff Tribal Fish Hatchery (TFH) and Keweenaw Bay TBF for their annual fish health inspection. The La Crosse Fish Health Center provides health inspection services to four tribal hatcheries in Region 3. LFHC also tests other groups of cultured and wild fish from other tribal organizations in the region. These inspections screen fish for many different types of certifiable fish pathogens. Healthy fish are a key component to the success of stocked fish. This year, at Red Cliff TFH six groups of brook trout were sampled and seven groups of brook trout and lake trout were sampled at Keweenaw Bay TFH for certifiable pathogens.

La Crosse Fish Health Center Expansion Plans on Target

by Becky Lasee

The La Crosse Fish Health Center will soon be welcoming six permanent staff members to operate the new 5,800 sq. ft. Whitney Genetics Laboratory. The Geneticist and three Fish Biologists have been selected and will be starting setup of the Laboratory this summer. Construction of the new addition is projected to start in June and be completed in September. The primary mission of the Genetics Lab will be detection of Asian Carp in the Chicago Area Waterway System (CAWS) using eDNA technology. This work is currently being done by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Annual Mississippi River Research Consortium

by Corey Puzach & Sarah Leis

In April, the annual Mississippi River Research Consortium was held at the Radisson Hotel in La Crosse, Wisconsin. The Consortium was founded in 1968 with the primary mission of promoting issues among scientists and policy makers about the Mississippi River. This year, several staff members from the La Crosse Fish Health Center attended the annual Consortium. Platform and poster presentations focused on River Ecosystem Studies, Asian Carp, Wildlife Ecology, Habitat Resotation and Management Studies, Environmental Chemistry, Physiology and Modeling, Aquatic Organisms, Aquatic Ecology, Fish Ecology, Freshwater Mussels, and Landscape Ecology. LFHC staff enjoyed the meeting and gained a lot of knowledge about issues pertaining to the Mississippi River.

Corey Puzach, fish biologist at LFHC, presented in the Environmental Chemistry, Physiology and Modeling session. The presentation shared findings from a two year study that the La Crosse Fish Health Center participated in. The study was a survey of fish pathogens found in interstate movement of baitfish. The presentation discussed the background of the study, its framework, and some of it's findings.

Congressman Tim Walz Visits La Crosse's Upper Mississippi Environmental Sciences Center

by Becky Lasee

Becky Lasee of the La Crosse Fish Health Center joined staff of the Upper Mississippi Environmental Sciences Center, United States Geological Survey, in hosting Congressman Tim Walz, 1st District, Minnesota to the La Crosse area on April 10th. Mr. Walz was joined by staffers and three NGO representatives, all interested in learning about research to stop the spread of Asian Carp. It was of special interest to him that numerous agencies are working together for early detection and control of these invasive fish. Walz said Asian Carp pose a serious threat to the quality of life in Minnesota which is known for its pristine rivers and lakes.



Mississippi River at Sunset Photo S. Leis

SCEP Student Completes Graduate Thesis

by Becky Lasee



Beka McCann taking samples during a wild fish health survey USFWS photo

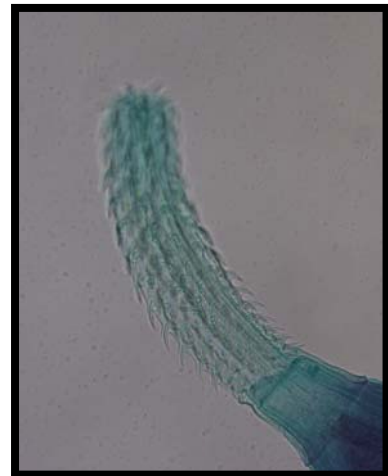
SCEP student Beka McCann of the La Crosse Fish Health Center successfully defended her M.S. thesis on April 20, 2012. Beka is a student of Aquatic Sciences, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse and her research focused on the viruses of fathead minnows, golden shiners and white suckers from baitfish dealers in Wisconsin. Once the thesis is approved by the Dean's Office, Beka will be converted to a permanent Fish Biologist position at the Center.

Public Outreach

Environmental Education Days

by Sarah Leis

In celebration of Earth Day, the Sparta Meadowview Middle School had an Environmental Education Day. On this day, the morning was dedicated to programs and activities dealing with the outdoors or natural resources. They invited many local USGS, USFWS, and USACE offices to participate and provide presentations to the 6th graders. Staff from the La Crosse Fish Health Center participated and provided an educational session on fish anatomy and parasites that can infection fish. The children really appreciated the “hands-on” fish dissection. For the parasites, the children were given handouts with descriptions of the major groups of parasites that can infect fish. Then, microscopes were set-up with representatives of each parasite group and the students had to figure out which parasite group they were looking at. Most of the children really enjoyed learning about parasites and seeing some of their unique attachment organs.



The attachment organ of the Acanthocephalans or “spiny headed worms” USFWS S. Leis