



AFA NEWS

Newsletter of the Alabama Fisheries Association

August, 2002

ABOUT THE AFA

The Alabama Fisheries Association (AFA) is an organization of professionals dedicated to the development, conservation, management, and wise utilization of commercial and recreational fisheries in Alabama. The AFA promotes all branches of fishery science and related technology, with emphasis on the exchange and dissemination of knowledge about fish and other aquatic life. Annual membership fees are \$5.00; three-year memberships are \$15.00. Members are encouraged to purchase three-year memberships. This helps our financial stability and you will avoid any increases in dues that may occur during that time. Dues may be sent to Dave Cline, AFA Treasurer, Alabama Cooperative Extension System, 917 Snow Street, Oxford, AL 36203.

AFA web page – for information about AFA (and recent newsletters) point your web browser to:

www.alabamafisheriesassociation.org

The web site has lots of **photos from last year's meeting** at Gulf Shores (and also, apparently, at the Florabama Lounge). Check it out. There may be material you can use for blackmail purposes.

Thanks to all of you who contributed to this newsletter. If you were not contacted about submitting something for this newsletter and would like to receive a "call for articles" (via e-mail) for the next newsletter, please notify the editor: Rob Angus, Biology Department, UAB, Birmingham, AL 35294-1170. Phone: (205) 934-4799, FAX: (205) 975-6097, or email: raangus@uab.edu.

Got e-mail? If you received this newsletter by U.S. (snail) mail, it means we don't have a current e-mail

address for you. To provide us with your e-mail address, please send a brief message via e-mail to raangus@uab.edu. You will then be placed on our e-mail mailing list and will receive calls for articles, other occasional announcements, etc. When the winter newsletter comes out, you will be sent a message with a URL for your web browser so you can read it on-line. Members with cyberspace access are not sent hard copies of the newsletter unless they request one. This saves AFA a dollar or more per member and has reduced our newsletter production and mailing costs substantially.

STEERING COMMITTEE

The 2002-2003 AFA Steering Committee consists of: Steve Smith, President (ADCNR), Randell Goodman, President Elect (Auburn), Jay Haffner, Past President (ADNCR), Rob Andress, Secretary (Auburn), Dave Cline, Treasurer (Auburn), Rob Angus, Newsletter Editor (UAB), Kevin Chalk (AL Power), Bernie Kuhajda (U. of AL), Norman Latona (SE Pond Mgt.), Stuart McGregor (Geo. Survey of AL), Doug Powell (AL Power), Wendy Seesock (Auburn), Jeff Slipke (Auburn), Barry Smith (American Sport Fish), Greg Whitis (Auburn), Stan Cook (ADNCR), Steve Rider, and Jim Howard (AL BASS Fed.). We are grateful to these folks for their willingness to help steer our organization in the right direction.

2003 AFA ANNUAL MEETING

The annual AFA meeting will be held at **Auburn University Hotel Conference Center in Auburn, Alabama February 24 - 26, 2003**

☆**Note: this is Monday – Wednesday.**☆

This change was necessitated due to limited availability of the conference center. The room rate will be \$69/night plus 10% tax. There are only 40 rooms blocked for this event and they will be held until January 24th. The phone number for the Conference Center is (334) 821-8200. Other motels in the area include:

Heart of Auburn	(334) 887-3462
Best Western	(334) 821-7001
Jameson Inn	(334) 502-5020
Hampton Inn	(334) 821-4111

The program will follow the usual format with meetings beginning at 1:00pm on Monday Feb. 24th, a reception that evening, meetings Tuesday morning, a scholarship fishing tournament that afternoon and a fish fry that evening at the Fisheries Unit. The meeting will conclude with sessions Wednesday morning and the final business meeting.

Registration fees for the annual meeting will be \$40.00 at the door. **Save \$5.00** and pre-register for \$35.00!

CALL FOR PAPERS

The program chairman for this year's meeting is our president-elect, Randell Goodman (334) 844-4667 goodmrk@auburn.edu. Session topics, and their moderators, are as follows:

Reservoir topics – Jerry Moss
AL Wildlife & Freshwater Fisheries
P.O. Box 305
Northport, AL 35476
(205) 339-5307 jmoss@juno.com

Fish Health topics – Bill Hemstreet
AL Fish Farming Center
529 Centerville St.
Greensboro, AL 33744
(334) 624-4016 whemstre@acesag.auburn.edu

Watershed/Riverine topics - Stuart McGregor
Geological Survey of Alabama
P.O. Box 869999
Tuscaloosa, AL 35486
(205) 349-2852 smcgregor@gsa.state.al.us

Aquaculture topics – Jesse Chappell
203 Swingle Hall
Auburn University, AL 36849
(334) 844-9209 chappjl@aces.edu

Mobile Basin topics – Scott Mettee
Geological Survey of Alabama
P.O. Box 869999
Tuscaloosa, AL 35486
(205) 349-2852 smettee@gsa.state.al.us

Coastal topics – Rick Wallace
AUMERC
4170 Commanders Dr.
Mobile, AL 36615
(251) 438-5690 rwallace@acesag.auburn.edu

If you would like to make a presentation, please fill in the form on the last page of this newsletter and send it to the appropriate session moderator. You are advised to get your form in soon (before the end of October) so you won't find that the session has already been filled. The meeting schedule will be included in the winter newsletter.

FROM THE PRESIDENT Steve Smith

“Too hot to fish, too hot for golf...”, and way too many reports to write in the office; oh those dog days of summer!!! Does anyone remember when it used to rain every other afternoon during the summer? It has been so long now it is a fleeting memory for me. I hope that most of you have gotten more rain than has fallen in Jacksonville this summer. Hopefully the drought will end soon.

On a lighter note, it is that time of year again when preparations start for our annual meeting. We will be returning to Auburn to celebrate the 20th anniversary of our organization. Randell Goodman will be setting up the meeting with some extracurricular activities that should be a lot of fun. Start making plans to join us at the end of February.

We will be awarding another \$500 scholarship to a graduate student doing research in a field related to fisheries science. This leaves the door open for quite a few candidates. Applicants have been slim the last two years so I would really appreciate everyone's help in finding candidates for this scholarship. Please spread the word. Contact Dr. David Bayne at (334) 844-9321 or dbayne@acesag.auburn.edu for application instructions.

Finally, there has been some heated debate on whether we should change the current logo or keep it the same. Please log on to our new website address (see Dave Cline's column) and "vote for change or leave the same!!" Results will be announced at the annual meeting.

Thanks, and I hope to see all of you in Auburn.

FROM THE TREASURER

David Cline

It has been a wild summer for the new treasurer including a home and office move to Auburn, having a new house and a new baby. Wish me luck. The Association remains in good financial standing with an overall balance of \$6,622.30 in checking and money market accounts and \$12,844.84 in the scholarship CD.

In non-financial news the AFA has a new world wide web domain name. You can now reach the AFA home page at

www.alabamafisheriesassociation.org.

Please check this out and let me know how it works. As the chairman of the cyberspace committee I am also looking for any new information or links that members would like to add to the web page. Please notice and participate in the survey regarding the AFA logo on the home page.

AFA SCHOLARSHIP WINNER

The recipient of the 2002 AFA Graduate Scholarship is Steve Herrington. Steve is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Fisheries and Allied Aquacultures, Auburn University. He earned B.S. and M.S. degrees from the University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign. His doctoral dissertation

research project is entitled "Nonindigenous red shiner, *Cyprinella lutrensis*, in aquatic ecosystems: ecology and implications for invasion theory". Among his numerous awards, Steve has won honors for presentations given at recent AFA and ASB meetings.



Interim Department Head, David Rouse (left), 2002 AFA Graduate Scholarship recipient Steve Herrington (center) and David Bayne (right).

The AFA offers an annual scholarship (\$500) to a deserving graduate student who is currently enrolled in an Alabama university and has an approved research proposal related to fisheries science. The scholarship award can be used in any way to support the recipient's graduate education. The scholarship fund received an excellent initial boost from the Alabama Power Foundation which provided a generous gift of \$10,000.

The **application deadline is 1 November 2002** and the application procedure can be found on the AFA web page (<http://www.ag.auburn.edu/afa>). For additional information, contact David Bayne (334) 844-9321 dbayne@acesag.auburn.edu.

SECOND NON-GAME CONFERENCE HELD IN AUBURN ON JULY 23-24

Biologists from across Alabama and adjacent states met at Alabama's Second Non-Game Conference in Auburn, Al on July 23-24. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the status of and give priority rankings to Alabama's native freshwater mussel, snail, fish, amphibian, reptile, bird, and mammal species. The conference was co-sponsored by the

Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries (WFFD) of Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR), Alabama Power Company, Alabama Wildlife Federation, Auburn University School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, Auburn University Student Chapter of the Wildlife Society, Black Warrior-Cahaba Rivers Land Trust, International Paper Company, Mead Westvaco Corporation, and the William R. And Fay Ireland Distinguished Professorship Endowment Fund, and dedicated to the memory of Robert "Bob" C. McCollum, previous Non-Game Coordinator at ADCNR.

Scott Mettee and Pat O'Neil (Geological Survey of Alabama) served as co-chairs of the fish committee. Other members included: Jonathan Armbruster, Elise Irwin, and Carol Johnston (Auburn University), Hank Bart (Tulane University Royal D. Suttkus Fish Collection), Paul Blanchard and Bob Stiles (Samford University), Greg Lein (ADCNR State Lands Division), Malcolm Pierson (Alabama Power Company), Tom Shepard (Geological Survey of Alabama), Bob Hastings (Natural Heritage Program), Daniel Drennen (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Jackson, MS), Herbert Boschung and Bernie Kuhajda (University of Alabama), J.R. Shute (Conservation Fisheries in Knoxville, TN), Peggy Shute (TVA in Knoxville, TN), and Mel Warren (U.S. Forest Service in Jackson, MS).

Committee members were asked to rank species within one of the following five priorities:

Priority 1; Species/taxon of highest conservation concern= critically imperiled and at risk of extinction/extirpation because of extreme rarity, restricted distribution, decreasing population trend/population viability problems, and specialized habitat needs/habitat vulnerability due to natural/human-caused factors. Immediate research and/or conservation action required.

Priority 2; Species/taxon of high conservation concern= imperiled because of 3 of 4 of the following: rarity; very limited, disjunct, or peripheral distribution; decreasing population trend/population viability problems; specialized habitat needs/habitat

vulnerability due to natural/human-caused factors. Timely research and/or conservation action needed.

Priority 3; Species/taxon of moderate conservation concern= conservation problems exist because of insufficient data on the species or because of two of four of the following: small populations; limited, disjunct, or peripheral distribution; decreasing population trend/ population viability problems; specialized habitat needs/habitat vulnerability due to natural/human-caused factors. Research and/or conservation action recommended.

Priority 4; Species/taxon of moderate low conservation concern= secure, yet conservation concerns exist because of one of four of the following: relative abundance; limited, disjunct, or peripheral distribution; decreasing population trend/population viability problems; specialized habitat needs/increasing habitat vulnerability due to natural/human-caused factors. Research on specific problem suggested.

Priority 5; Species/taxon of moderate lowest conservation concern= demonstrably secure, with size of population stable/increasing, geographic distribution stable/expanding, population trend/population viability stable/ increasing, relatively limited habitat vulnerability due to natural/human-caused factors, **or** and unusual visitor to the state. No specific monitoring or conservation action needed.

One hundred and fifteen (38%) of approximately 300 native freshwater and estuarine described and undescribed fish species received a priority 1 to 4 ranking at the conference. Twenty-one species were ranked as priority 1, 26 as priority 2, 33 as priority 3, and 35 as priority 4. The remaining 175 species not nominated for consideration by the committee will receive a priority 5 ranking. Priority 1 species included the Alabama sturgeon, palezone shiner, Cahaba shiner, ironcolor shiner, suckermouth minnow, Alabama cavefish, pygmy sculpin, spring pygmy sunfish, slackwater darter, holiday darter, vermilion darter, brighteye darter, lollipop darter, watercress darter, rush darter, boulder darter, blotchside darter, slenderhead darter, snail darter, one of two undescribed muscadine darters, and the

halloween darter. Priority 2 species included the gulf sturgeon, Alabama shad, blue shiner, streamline chub, an undescribed form of the speckled chub, ghost shiner, dusky shiner, stargazing minnow, broadstripe shiner, bluenose shiner, mountain madtom, an undescribed form of stonecat, brindled madtom, frecklebelly madtom, shoal bass, two undescribed forms of the Warrior darter, bluebreast darter, lipstick darter, coldwater darter, Tuscomb darter, bandfin darter, an undescribed form of the bandfin darter, goldline darter, coal darter, and gilt darter.

The WFFD will publish three reports from the Auburn conference. One publication, similar in format to the 1986 Vertebrate Animals of Alabama in Need of Special Attention, will include detailed accounts for all priority 1 and 2 species. A second publication, similar in format to the 1984 Vertebrate Wildlife of Alabama, will include concise information concerning the distribution, relative abundance, and status of Alabama species considered for the conference. A third as yet undefined publication will assist the WFFD in its efforts to fund future research and effectively manage Alabama's priority wildlife. The WFFD intends to publish all three reports by the end of September 2003.

For further information, contact Scott Mettee (205) 349-2852 smettee@gsa.state.al.us.

**ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT
Aquatic Assessment Unit**

Reservoir Water Quality Monitoring (RWQM)
Program

Monthly mainstem reservoir and tributary embayment sampling was initiated during April 2002 for the following projects: *Tributary Embayment and Mainstem Reservoir Water Quality Assessment of the Black Warrior River Basin*; *Water Quality Assessment of Alabama Reservoirs for Nutrient Criteria and Total Maximum Daily Load Development*; and, *Nutrient Criteria Compliance Monitoring of Alabama Reservoirs*. A total of 65 stations are monitored for these projects each month with vertical profiles of *in situ*

variables conducted at meter intervals and composite samples collected for nutrient and chlorophyll a analyses. Monthly monitoring is to be conducted through the end of the algal growing season in October.

The FY2003 Section 319 NPS grant application *Tributary Embayment Water Quality Assessment of the Tennessee River Basin and Water Quality Assessment of Alabama Reservoirs for Nutrient Criteria and Total Maximum Daily Load Development* was completed during April 2002.

Review of the draft report for the Intensive Water Quality Survey of the Chattahoochee and Conecuh River Reservoirs continued during the 3rd Quarter. Completion of the final report is scheduled for August 2002.

The draft report for the Intensive Water Quality Survey of Coosa, Tallapoosa, and Alabama River Reservoirs was completed during the 3rd Quarter. Completion of the final report is scheduled for September 2002.

The draft report for the nutrient criteria compliance monitoring of Weiss and Harris Reservoirs was completed during the 3rd Quarter. Completion of the final report is scheduled for August 2002.

For further information on the RWQM Program contact Fred Leslie at (334) 260-2752 or fal@adem.state.al.us.

Fish Tissue Monitoring Program

Analytical data was provided to Land Division/ADEM for fish collected from five stations in the Black Creek and Big Wills Creek area of Gadsden. Staff collected and processed 37 fish during the 2nd Quarter in association with this Land Division request to sample the area around the Gulf States Steel facility in Gadsden.

Staff collected fish for contaminant analyses from four locations on Opossum and Valley Creeks near Hueytown and Bessemer, AL during July/August 2002.

Historical bioaccumulative contaminant concentrations in fish collected from stations with

current consumption advisories is being compiled and analyzed.

For further information on the Fish Tissue Monitoring Program contact Chris Smith at (334) 260-2753.

Point / Nonpoint Source Assessment Programs

Screening level macroinvertebrate assessments were conducted at 63 stations in conjunction with the 2002 NPS Assessment of the Black Warrior and Cahaba River basins. An additional 41 sites were assessed in support of the Department's TMDL efforts. Based on these results, fish IBI assessments and chemical assessments were conducted at 34 study stations and 27 reference sites. For further information on this project contact Lisa Houston at (334) 260-2746 or esh@adem.state.al.us.

ADEM's Periphyton Bioassessment Pilot Project was initiated during 2002 to test the ability of three bioassessment methods to document impairment from nutrient enrichment. Periphyton bioassessments were conducted at 33 sites, including 14 reference and 19 study stations. For further information on this project contact Lisa Houston at (334) 260-2746 or esh@adem.state.al.us.

The FY02 Ecoregional Reference Site biological monitoring for the Black Warrior and Cahaba River Basin NPS project is underway. Field collections from 26 sites have been made using FOD's intensive multihabitat aquatic macroinvertebrate assessment. Samples will be picked and identified in the laboratory prior to entering the data in the PACE macroinvertebrate database. For more information on this project contact Vickie Hulcher at vjh@adem.state.al.us or 334-260-2700.

Staff participated in, and made a presentation at, the Kickoff meeting and two subsequent workgroup meetings for the next update of the Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) Conservation Assessment effort. Additional data fields requested at the meetings have been added by staff to the SWCD ACCESS database template and forms have been designed to allow data entry of the associated information.

Funding: The FY2003 CWA §319 NPS grant application *Rotational River Basin Approach:*

Surface Water Quality Screening Assessment of the Tennessee River Basin was completed during April 2002.

Reporting: A first draft of the 2001 Escatawpa, Tombigbee, and Mobile NPS Screening Assessment report is currently underway. The 2000 Tallapoosa NPS Screening Assessment report is in final review.

Alabama Monitoring and Assessment Program (ALAMAP)

The 2002 ALAMAP sampling was initiated during August 2002. A total of 59 stream stations will be sampled by the Montgomery, Birmingham, Decatur, and Mobile Field Offices of Field Operations/ADEM. Ortho-phosphorus is a new parameter for this year to assist Water Division in establishing nutrient criteria for streams. For more information on this project contact Lee Davis at MLD@adem.state.al.us or 334-260-2783.

AUBURN UNIVERSITY

Conference

All Auburn University Fisheries Alums are invited to a conference entitled, "Charting the Future in Aquatic Sciences/ Building on the Swingle Legacy". The conference will tentatively be held May 15-17th, 2003 at the Auburn University Hotel and Conference Center. The conference is intended to celebrate the accomplishments of the past and to envision the successes of the future. The conference will also provide an opportunity for alumni to meet old friends and to meet other Auburn "fishheads" that you may not know. This conference is being sponsored by the Auburn University Fisheries Alum and you may get updates about the meeting by going to this website:

www.ag.auburn.edu/dept/faa/

or contact Randell Goodman (334) 844-4667 (goodmrk@auburn.edu).

Angler Survey

This fall Drs. Rusty Wright and Dennis DeVries from Auburn University Department of Fisheries and Allied Aquacultures in collaboration with Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries (DWFF) will be conducting a mail survey of Alabama freshwater anglers to determine their changing needs, demographics, and fishing habits. This survey project is funded by DWFF and the Federal Aid to Sportfish Restoration program. The last survey of this kind conducted by the state was in 1987. Comparison between the 1987 and the current survey will help document shifts both in use and attitudes of anglers over this 15 years.

The survey will be sent to 2000 anglers randomly selected from license records. This type of survey is vital to provide the information necessary to help guide the management efforts of DWFF. To encourage return of the survey incentives will be awarded to randomly chosen anglers that respond within 6 weeks.

The past 15 years have seen continued urbanization of Alabamians and increases of some minority populations. Tournament angling continues to increase in the state. Opposition to tournament angling specifically and all angling by some has become more evident. These shifts in both demographics and attitudes should provide an interesting contrast between the 2002 and 1987 survey.

U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE

The Panama City Field Office, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, conducted a survey to determine the availability of Gulf sturgeon spawning habitat in Northwest Florida and Southeast Alabama river systems. The potential spawning sites identified were based on habitat characterizations (limestone walls, outcroppings, hard substrate, etc.) described by other researchers that had documented Gulf sturgeon spawning with egg collections. We located 152 sites totaling 93 km in the Escambia/Conecuh, Yellow, Choctawhatchee, Pea, Apalachicola and Ochlockonee rivers. The sites ranged from small individual sections of 45 m in length to almost

continuous potential spawning habitat within a 7 km stretch of river. Most of the potential Gulf sturgeon spawning sites were located in Alabama (90%) with the Conecuh, Pea and Choctawhatchee rivers having 38.6 km, 32.2 km, and 12.9 km of habitat available respectively.

Panama City biologists used sinking gill nets and drift nets to collect and tag 39 Gulf sturgeon in a summer resting area in the Conecuh River below Brewton, Alabama. Alabama Department of Conservation fisheries biologist Joe Zolczynski and several Alabama Conservation Enforcement officers assisted in the investigation. The fish weighed from 1 to 75 kg. Only one of the fish collected had been previously tagged. The study is part of an effort to determine the Gulf sturgeon population in the river system.

UAB

Cage trials with tilapia in recreational ponds are continuing for the fourth year. Farmers are successfully growing these fish to harvest size (1.25 lbs) within the summer when they start with a fingerling at least 30 g in weight. New local markets are being developed for these fish. Return on investment exceeds 30% of capital outlays in the first year, greater than 100% in subsequent years. For further information contact Steve Watts (205) 934-2045 sawatts@uab.edu.



Cyprinella trichroistia

CALL FOR PAPERS

**Alabama Fisheries Association
Annual Meeting
February 24 - 26, 2003
Auburn, AL**

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Title of Paper: _____

Brief Summary: _____

Please submit your title to the appropriate session moderator (see page 2) as soon as possible, but no later than the end of October. Titles and abstracts should be sent to Rob Andress, ALCFWRU, 103 Swingle Hall, Auburn, AL 36849 by Dec. 1 for inclusion in the printed program.