

Enclosure 26

COE-FWS Email
Informal Consultation
17 May 2005

Brandt, Joanne U SAM

From: Brandt, Joanne U SAM
Sent: Tuesday, May 17, 2005 11:38 AM
To: 'Jerry_Ziewitz@fws.gov'
Cc: Zettle, Brian A SAM; Peck, Brian E SAM; Hrabovsky, Cheryl L SAM; Flakes, Curtis M SAM; Findley, Diane I SAM; Morisani, Eugene A SAM; Day, Kenneth SAM; Bradley, Kenneth P SAM; Lang, Matthew J SAM; Vaughan, Memphis Jr SAM; Hoehn, Ted; Mesing, Charles; Gail_Carmody@fws.gov
Subject: RE: Update sturgeon spawning Apalach

Jerry:

Thanks for the updates. As we agreed last week, we operating in the "run of river" mode due to drying conditions in the basin. We can continue to do so through 1 June. Conditions are continuing to be very dry, with very little rainfall received over the weekend. River stages on Monday were between 8 and 9 feet at Blountstown. At this time river stages are projected to fall gradually to approximately 7 feet by the end of this week. I'll have to get with you later this week to see what the further projections would be by the end of the month. But at this time it looks very dry with stages continuing to gradually fall.

Are you still planning to look for the other tagged sturgeon?

Joanne

-----Original Message-----

From: Jerry_Ziewitz@fws.gov [mailto:Jerry_Ziewitz@fws.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, May 17, 2005 10:28 AM
To: Brandt, Joanne U SAM
Cc: Zettle, Brian A SAM; Peck, Brian E SAM; Hrabovsky, Cheryl L SAM; Flakes, Curtis M SAM; Findley, Diane I SAM; Morisani, Eugene A SAM; Day, Kenneth SAM; Bradley, Kenneth P SAM; Lang, Matthew J SAM; Vaughan, Memphis Jr SAM; Hoehn, Ted; Mesing, Charles; Gail_Carmody@fws.gov
Subject: Update sturgeon spawning Apalach

Joanne,

We checked our egg sampling pads on the river Friday 5/13 and Monday 5/16. Water temperature was 23.8 C on Friday, and 24.3 C on Monday. We collected five more eggs on Friday from the rock shoals site, and none from the Aspalaga Bluffs (downstream of I-10) site. Two of these eggs hatched in our lab sometime between 10:00 am Saturday and 6:30 am Monday, which I confirmed were sturgeon larvae before leaving for the river.

Only one of the radio tagged fish was present upstream of Aspalaga Bluffs on Friday, one which has been in that area for several weeks now. This fish was not detected Monday, but another tagged fish was detected at the dam, one which was located at rm 66 on 5/04. Because the water temperature now exceeds the highest temperature at which eggs have been collected in all previous studies (23.9 C) and no new eggs were found Monday, we pulled the pads. Lab studies have shown that gamete and egg development are compromised at temperatures greater than 25 C.

It appears that sturgeon spawning on the river has likely concluded, but it is also likely that larvae are present on the rock shoals, given the collection of eggs last Friday. Gulf sturgeon larvae probably remain at the spawning site for the first week or two after hatching, hiding in the crevices of the rock and gravel substrate before dispersing. To maintain the shoals as a habitat for these larvae, I recommend continuing the "run-of-river" mode of operations at least until the end of the month, May 31, when eggs spawned at the same time as the last eggs we collected should develop to a free-swimming stage ready for dispersal off the shoals. On Monday, the highest portions of the shoal were visible above water for the first time in our work this season, and pads from which we had previously collected eggs or observed the cases of hatched eggs were retrieved from depths as shallow as 1.5 ft.