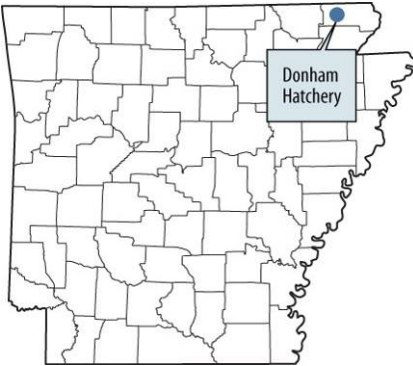




WILLIAM H. DONHAM HATCHERY NEWSLETTER

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2009 at the Donham Hatchery, as well as much of northern Arkansas, started off with a bang. The “Ice Storm ‘09”, as it was dubbed by local media, hit with a fury and did substantial damage in the areas it covered, Donham hatchery being no exception. The hatchery received two inches of ice, in the form of freezing rain, by the time it was through, leaving the hatchery and residences without power for two weeks and making the grounds look like a war zone. Trees were stripped of limbs and power lines were on the ground in every direction. In Clay county alone 15,000 utility poles were down! To date crews are still in the process of getting things cleaned up. Now on to happier news...Fish Culture.



Main entrance to hatchery. Only utility pole left somewhat standing.



Trees prior to major de-limbing

The Donham Hatchery began its fish culture activities with the transfer of channel catfish yearlings to the Pot Shoals Net Pen Facility. The movement of these fish is necessary to make room for our spring production of other species. These fish were received as fingerlings from the Joe Hogan Hatchery and grown to a target size. Kelly Winningham, Fish Pathologist, performed a health assessment on the fish and after a clean bill of health was given, harvest operations began. The hatchery moved over 120,000

yearlings for grow-out to catchable size. Local Wildlife Officer Mike Ryan was gracious enough to assist in the harvest as the hatchery was a man short due to the transfer of Jason Collier to the Enforcement Division.



Kettle harvest of channel catfish yearlings

Once all the catfish were at their new home the hatchery staff moved on to crappie production. Donham Hatchery annually produces Black-nose crappie for stocking across the state. With this year's requests being double the historical stocking numbers, additional acreage was put in for the culture of these fish. All broodstock utilized at Donham hatchery exhibit the "black nose" characteristic.

Upon finishing stocking broodstock crappie into spawning ponds, the hatchery staff moved its focus to Smallmouth bass production. The hatchery is in its second year (of a three year project) stocking smallmouth bass fingerlings into the Eleven Point River. District III biologists are studying how stocking of hatchery reared bass influences the overall smallmouth population in this watershed. Fingerlings from this project will be freeze branded with liquid nitrogen for later identification and tracking. The hatchery is also looking at how production might be influenced in regard to holding broodstock fish from the previous culture year versus bringing in wild broodfish from the river to spawn. Donham hatchery over-wintered broodstock utilized during the '08 culture season and also obtained additional broodfish from the Eleven Point in February of this year. We will report on this comparison in a future newsletter.



Zack & Mike sorting Smallmouth bass brood

Other fish culture related activities this quarter have included the stocking of sauger fry to meet fingerling requests for the Arkansas River. The staff at Charlie Craig Hatchery worked their tails off to coordinate getting the broodstock for this project as well as perform the actual spawning and care for these eggs/fry. We appreciate their efforts on this front and for the quality of fry that we received. Additionally, hatchery staff has been busy preparing ponds for the remaining species to be cultured at this facility during this culture season.

Along with fish culture activities performed during this quarter the staff has been busy with other duties. Jeff and Mark attended staff meetings in Benton as well as our annual fish production meeting. Jeff assisted District III biologists with an evaluation of the fish population in the Strawberry River in Lawrence County. If someone wants a mess of channel catfish for a fry this is the place to go fishing. They are thick. Mark went down to Brinkley to participate in "Operation Delta Mongoose", the Northern Snakehead Eradication Project.

The first quarter also saw a change in personnel at the Donham Hatchery. Jason Collier, who was a technician for two years, decided he wanted to try his luck in the Enforcement Division. He was assigned to Poinsett County in the northeast part of the state. He has been informed that since he is still somewhat close to the hatchery he may be called upon for his seining expertise in the future. We wish him well in this new chapter of his career. Replacing Jason is Mike Lewis, former assistant manager at the Jim Hinkle/Spring River Hatchery.

Mike has been with the Commission for 13 years. He began his career at the Joe Hogan hatchery before relocating to the Jim Hinkle/Spring River hatchery as a technician and eventually moving up to assistant manager. We welcome Mike to the flat lands and mosquitoes of the Delta.

