

**Replenishing the Fishery:
Chippewa Tribal Hatcheries**



Chippewa tribal hatcheries

An introduction

Hatcheries and the subsequent stocking programs have long been a priority for Ojibwa-tribes. The current expansion and growth seen in tribal hatcheries reflects the concern Ojibwa people have towards the well being of the fishery and the resources as a whole.

A recognition of the interdependence of all life forms and the necessary respect man must show towards the Earth and all living beings is deeply imbedded in the traditional value system of the Ojibwa people. Responding to the need to nurture the fishery at a time when the demands upon its resources are significant only follows an age old system of Ojibwa resource management.

As a food source the fishery, both inland and in Lake Superior, has played a significant role in Ojibwa life. Seasonal fishing, particularly during the spring and fall, fell into the pattern of seasonal food gathering for the Ojibwa Bands, whose semi-nomadic lifestyle led them to sources of food according to the seasons.

That dependence on the resource for subsistence was recognized by tribal leaders during the time of white settlement and treaty-making. Although the demands of the European settlers and the U.S. Government for Ojibwa land ulti-

mately led to the cession of most of the Upper Great Lakes areas which were traditional hunting, fishing and gathering grounds for the Ojibwa people, the continued right to use the resources on those lands was never relinquished.

The rights, specifically reserved for the coming generations of Ojibwa people, to hunt, fish and gather on the ceded lands in the Treaties of 1837, 1842 and 1854, have come to be known today as "treaty rights."

Today, the Ojibwa people still rely on the fisheries as a source of food and survival. Several Bands maintain active tribal commercial fisheries on Lake Superior, including Bad River and Red Cliff in Wisconsin; Keweenaw Bay and Bay Mills in Michigan and Grand Portage in Minnesota. In addition to the tribal commercial fisheries, many tribal members fish Lake Superior specifically for home use.

On inland lakes, the fishery also continues to be an important food source and, following the reaffirmation of the treaty retained rights, the Ojibwa tribal members have gone off-reservation to harvest fish during spring, as was traditionally done.

The Ojibwa, however, real-

ize the right to use carries with it the responsibility to manage and to care for the resource, which is shared by many user groups outside of the tribal people and which has been subjected over the years to overuse and degradation.

The tribal promotion of hatcheries and stocking, plus their continuing involvement both through the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission and their own tribal conservation departments, to participate in fishery assessments and ongoing studies, reflects their commitment to assure a healthy fishery in the area.

More fish is not the total answer to a healthy fishery. Those fish must also be healthy. Many of the fishery programs, plus GLIFWC staff, are joining other agencies in the research necessary to address problems identified in the fishery—such as PCB and mercury contamination or the impacts of exotic species such as river huffe and lamprey.

The challenges to those of us who walk this earth today are many in terms of preserving a fishery which will also be available in the future. The Ojibwa Bands, as both resource users and managers, are accepting those challenges and addressing the issues in a proactive manner.



Vincent St. Germaine, Lac du Flambeau tribal member, cleans walleye for home use. (Staff photo)



Ready to embark for an evening of spearfishing during the spring. Spearfishing has been practiced for generations by Ojibwa people who depend on the fishery for subsistence. (Staff photo)

Cover Picture: Joe Dan Rose, Bad River Fisheries Specialist, releases walleye fingerlings in Lake Namekagon as part of a joint stocking program. (Photo by Sue Erickson)



Red Cliff Commercial fishermen harvest throughout the year on Lake Superior. (Photo by Jeff Peters)

Lac du Flambeau Tribal Hatchery

22 million walleye fry; 759,000 walleye fingerlings; 30,000 lbs. trout

The grandfather (so to speak) of tribal hatcheries in the area is the Lac du Flambeau Hatchery which began in 1936 and over the course of years, has stocked millions upon millions of walleye into on-reservation and border lakes.

1991 provided yet another successful season for the hatchery, which collected 37 million walleye eggs this spring. According to Larry Wawronowitz, LdF Game and Fish Manager, the hatchery had a 65% hatch-out rate this season.

During the spawning season, LdF sends out two three-man spawning crews to collect fish for eggs through fyke-netting. The fertilized eggs are then placed into 315 MacDonald jars which are used for incubation.

LdF also owns 21 rearing ponds and has ten 200' raceways as well as 8 startup raceways which they use to maintain brood stock as well as rear fry to fingerling size.

1991's stocking has included about 22 million walleye fry stocked in on-reservation lakes and 759,000 walleye fingerlings about 1 1/2" to 1 3/4" placed in on-reservation or border lakes, according to Wawronowitz.

In addition the hatchery has produced about 30,000 lbs. of brown trout, brook trout and rain-

bow trout. Brown and brook trout have been stocked into Fence Lake, says Wawronowitz. However, the rainbow trout are retained for the hatchery's "pay fish" operation.

The pay fish operation has been run through the hatchery for three years. Essentially people pay for trout fished from a pond stocked with rainbow trout.

LdF maintains a seven man crew to run hatchery and conservation program operations. These include the Fish and Game Director, Assistant Fish and Game Director, Hatchery Manager, Assistant Hatchery Manager, and three pond technicians.

In addition to the hatchery, the Fish and Game Department is currently involved in a water resource program, which involves the study of on-reservation water quality, according to Wawronowitz. This involves mercury level analysis as well as phosphorus content analysis on 12 reservation lakes. They are also concerned about the impact of commercial cranberry operations on Little Trout Lake, he says, as well as looking at the pattern of water run-offs from the reservation.

At the moment, the analysis is done primarily to provide a data base and information for the Tribe.



Netting brood stock trout at the Lac du Flambeau Hatchery. (Staff photo)



Repairing nets used to collect fish for spawn at the Lac du Flambeau Hatchery. (Staff photo)



LdF hatchery crew feeds fingerlings held in outdoor raceways. (Staff photo)

Red Cliff Tribal Hatchery

700,000 walleye fry; 47,000 whitefish fry; 35,000 lake trout fingerlings

A new hatchery facility will expand the potential of the hatchery operation run through the Fisheries Department of the Red Cliff Band of Chippewa Indians. The capacity will expand from production of about 50,000 lake trout fingerlings annually to 100,000-200,000 per year.

Red Cliff Fisheries Biologist Mike Gallinat anticipates construction on a new 45' by 120' hatchery building to begin in the spring of 1992. The new facility is funded through a \$250,000 contract with the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The building Gallinat says, will house both Heath trays for the incubation of lake trout and Big Redds for walleye production. Whitefish are also produced and stocked through the hatchery.

Red Cliff has maintained an off-the-dock hatchery since 1986. A pole barn building houses the hatchery currently.

Red Cliff's location on Lake Superior and traditional dependence on the Lake Superior fishery for food, puts lake trout and whitefish on the hatchery's priority list.

However, Red Cliff has joined other Chippewa Bands in the production of walleye fry and fingerling by collecting eggs from speared walleye for incubation.

This season Red Cliff hatched over a million walleye fry, according to Gallinat. The Band has already stocked 454,000 walleye fry into Middle Eau Claire Lake, 115,000 fry into Bony Lake and given 40,000 fry to Fish for the Future for stocking of Lake Owen.

Gallinat notes that eggs collected from different off-reservation lakes are held separately in Big Redds in order to assure that fry are stocked back into the lakes

of origin.

In addition, the hatchery has stocked 47,000 whitefish into Lake Superior and is currently rearing 35,000 lake trout fingerlings. Gallinat is unsure whether the lake trout will be stocked this fall or early next spring. The hatchery would prefer to hold the fingerlings until spring in order to stock yearlings, but this is dependent on possible obstruction of the well system during building construction.

Gallinat anticipates that wells for the new hatchery will be drilled this summer and engineering and architecture completed this fall. Actual building construction will begin next spring.

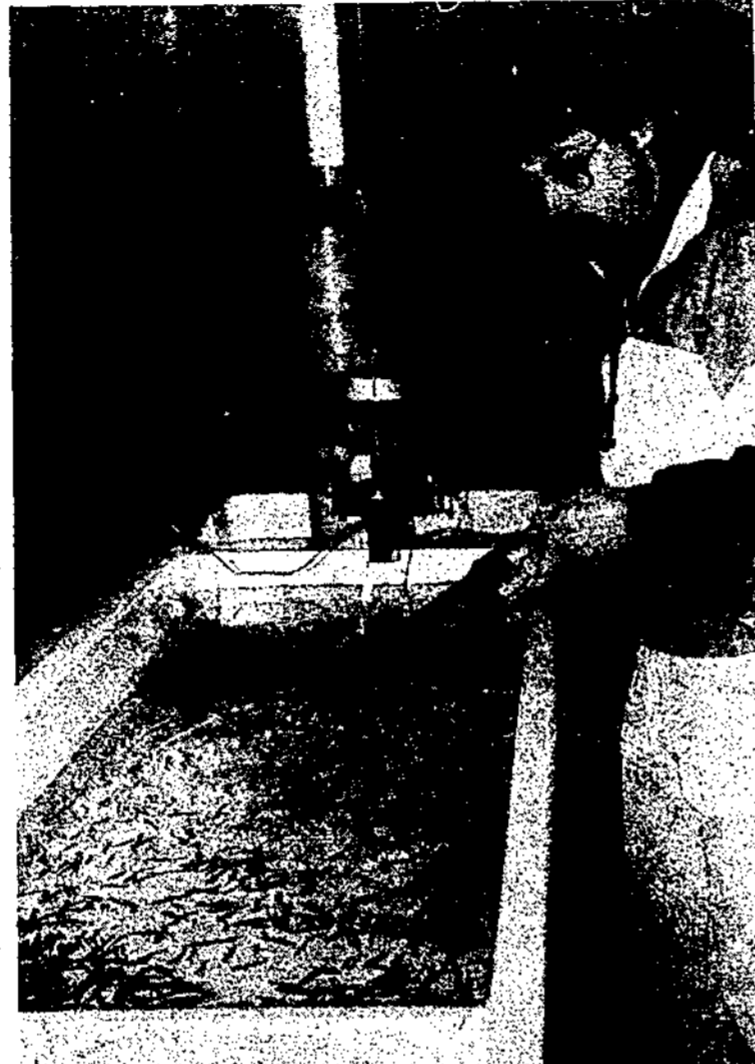
The 1992 spring hatchery operation may be disturbed by the construction process, he says. This, again, will depend on whether access to the well will be obstructed.

Currently, the Red Cliff hatchery is operated by a three person staff with Gallinat assisted by two fisheries technicians, Ken Charette and Kendall Holms. Next spring a hatchery manager will be hired.

The Red Cliff Band is also seeking funding for the construction of rearing ponds. Gallinat is working with the Soil and Conservation Service in seeking funding for ponds and is optimistic about the possibilities.

While Gallinat prefers stocking fingerling size fish, the ability to hold and rear the fry is not available at this time.

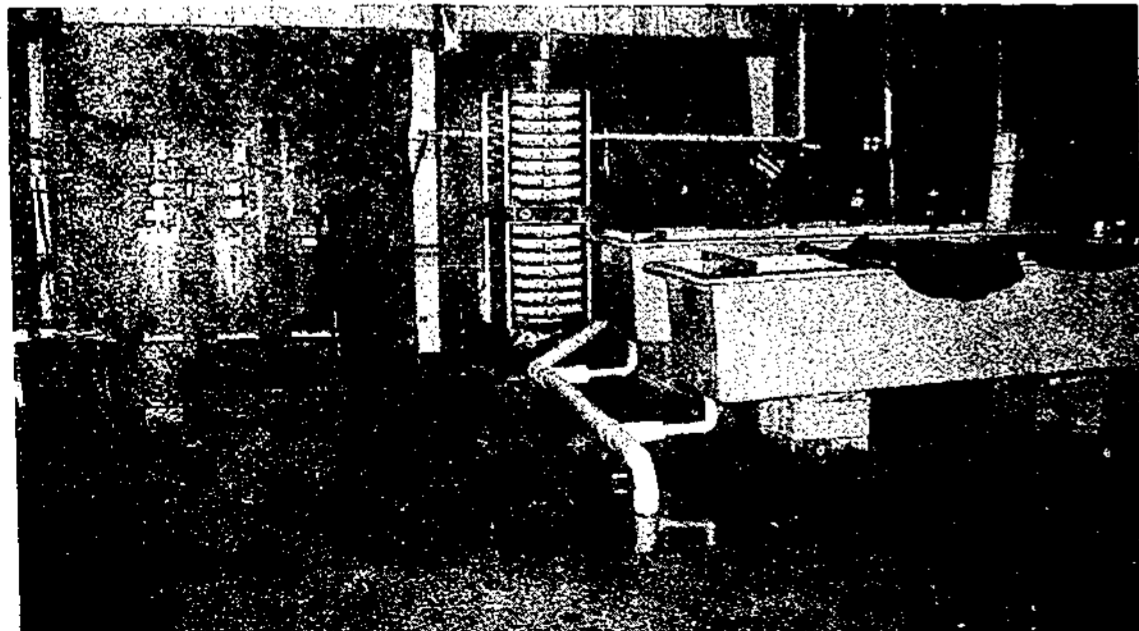
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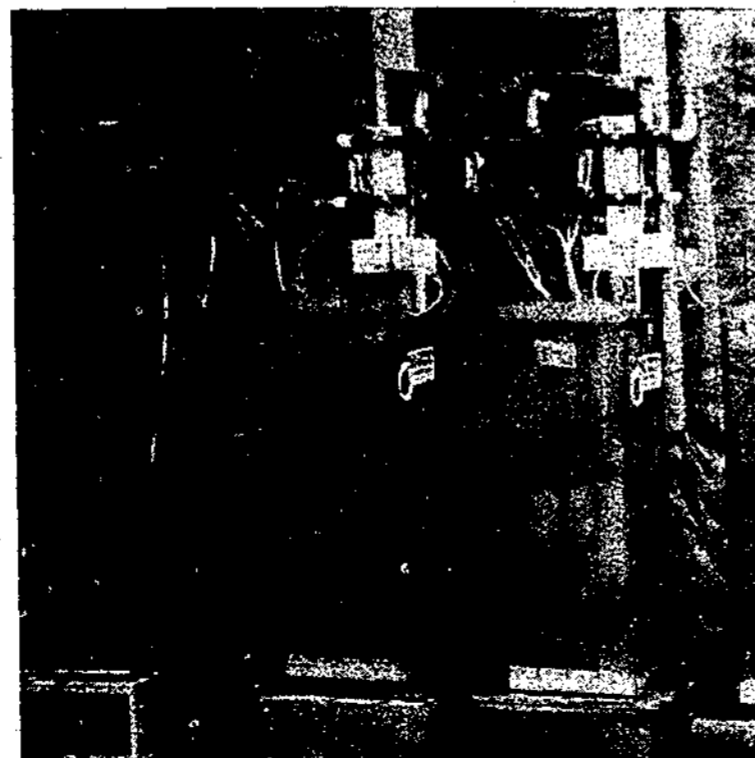
Red Cliff Fisheries Biologist Mike Gallinat checks lake trout fingerlings being reared in the tribal hatchery. (Photo by Amoose)



Lake trout fingerlings hatched out and reared at the Red Cliff Tribal Hatchery. (Photo by Amoose)



A garage currently houses the hatchery operation at the Red Cliff Reservation. Red Cliff is looking forward to a new, permanent facility for its hatchery operation. (Photo by Amoose)



Big Redds are the state-of-the-art in hatching fish eggs. The units are space efficient and capable of producing 1 million fry each. Many of the tribal hatcheries have used Big Redds as an answer to limited facilities. (Photo by Amoose)

Bad River Hatchery seeks greater rearing capacity 9,337,500 walleye fry produced

Over 9 million walleye fry were hatched by the Bad River Hatchery, Odanah, WI, this spring, according to Bad River Fisheries Specialist Joe Rose.

For Bad River the major limiting factor in the newly renovated hatchery complex is the lack of adequate rearing pond space to produce larger quantities of fingerlings, Rose notes, adding that the plans for expansion are in the making.

Rose, who has managed the hatchery since 1987, noted that the cooperative project with the Cable Area Fish for the Future (see article page 3 of MASINAIGAN) resulted in 1.3 million walleye fry. 600,000 were stocked into Lake Namekagon, an off-reservation lake, and 700,000 were placed into various off-reservation rearing ponds in the Cable area after they had been hatched in Bad River's facility.

The remainder of the fry were stocked into the Bad and Kakagon Rivers on the Bad River Reservation and 200,000 are currently in on-reservation rearing ponds.

An additional 3 million fry received from the USFWS were also

stocked into the two large reservation rivers.

Rose notes that both the Bad and Kakagon Rivers are major tributaries to Lake Superior, and while the stocking occurs on the reservation and benefits tribal fishermen, the Chequamegon Baysport fishery is a major beneficiary of the Tribe's stocking operation.

Rose and Russell Corbine, hatchery manager, work with the hatchery on a full-time basis. However, five other staff are employed seasonally.

Although walleye have been the primary focus of Bad River's hatchery, Rose states that they are currently in the process of acquiring brood stock for a limited sturgeon culture project. Rose is interested in the production of sturgeon, but views the hatchery as in a "developmental stage" in this regard.

Another hatchery project involves tagging and data collection. Rose's crew has been performing mark and recapture studies for population estimates on the Kakagon River over the past four years, so has now acquired a sub-



Joe Dan Rose, Bad River Natural Resource Specialist, milks a speared walleye for eggs. (Photo by Sue Erickson)

stantial data base for an estimate of the river's walleye.

Expansion plans

Plans are in the wings for further expansion of the hatcheries capacity. Major renovations over the past three years have essentially rebuilt the old hatchery structure, provided insulation and year-round operating capabilities. The hatchery's current capacity is 179 quarts of eggs, Rose states. Each

quart can produce about 200,000-260,000 fry.

64 Bell jars are each capable of producing 2 quarts, and the hatchery's 5 Big Redds can hold eleven quarts each. Essentially, hatching plenty of fry is no problem.

However, the lack of rearing space is. This is the problem addressed by the new plan, which was submitted March, 1991 as a Congressional Appropriation Re-

quest for \$360,000. The funds would provide the hatchery new ponds, equipment and staff necessary to expand fingerling production.

Supported by the Bayfield County Board, the Cable Area Chamber of Commerce and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Rose is optimistic about the request, but doesn't anticipate final word until the end of summer.



Collecting fish for spawn. (Staff photo)



Lifting assessment nets at Bad River. (Staff photo)



Joe Dan Rose, Bad River natural resource specialist releases walleye fingerlings. (Photo by Jeff Peters)

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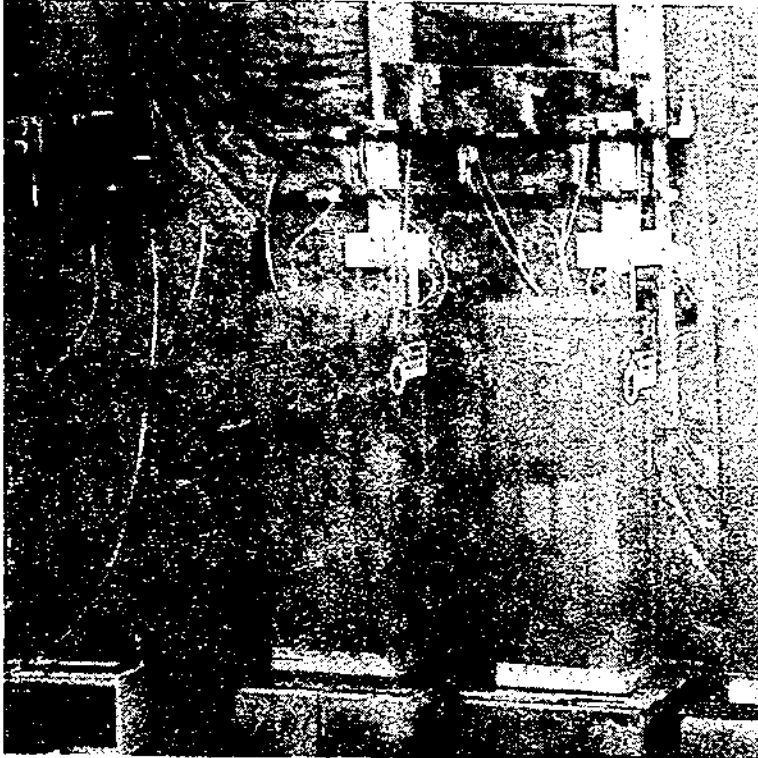
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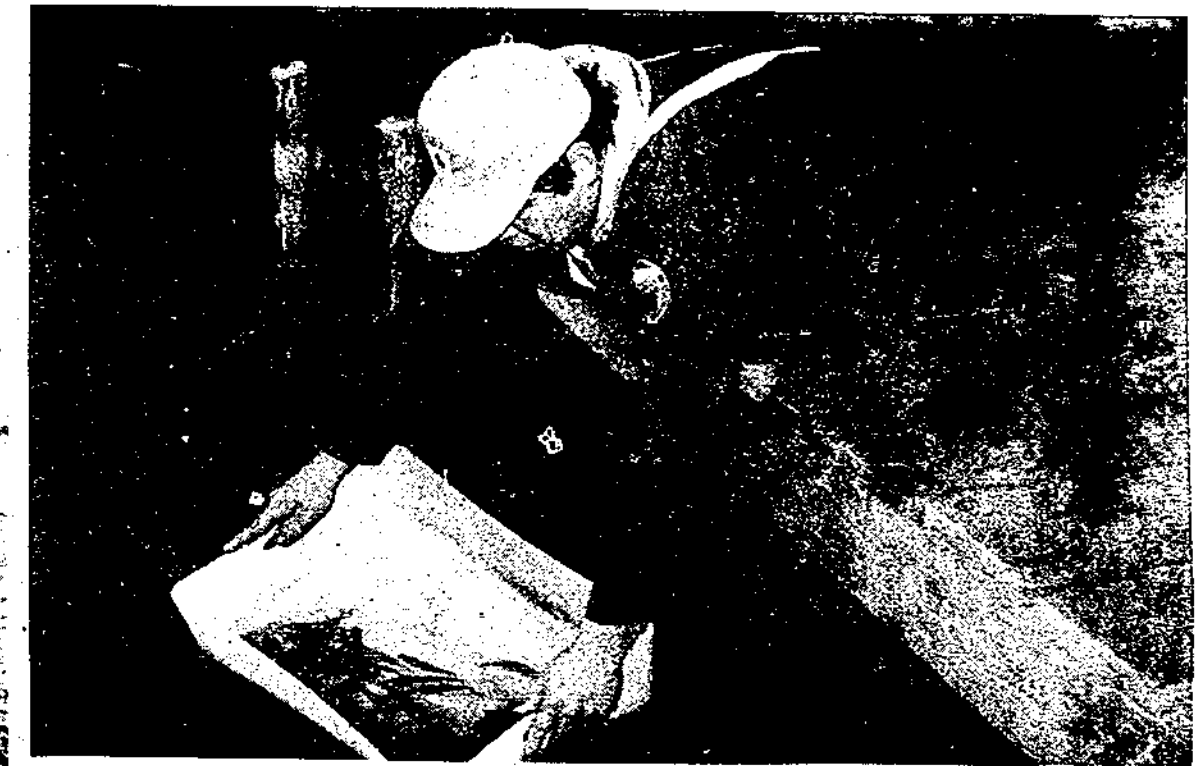
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The Sokaogon Tribal Hatchery

800,000 walleye fry produced

The hatchery run by Sokaogon Band of Chippewa relied entirely on eggs collected from speared fish this year, according to Leonard Guth, tribal planner who works with the hatchery operation.

There's a "homey" feel to the Sokaogon Band's tribal hatchery operation, which is housed in the basement of Leonard Guth Jr., a private citizen. Part of the pleasure of operating Big Redd incubators is their capacity to hatch large quantities of eggs in minimum space, making them conducive for use when building facilities are limited.

Guth is pleased with the 80% reproduction rate on the incubated eggs this year. The eggs, he says, were taken from fish speared and collected at the Pelican Lake landing.

The eggs, Guth said, took 13 to 14 days to hatch in the Big Redds. 75%, or approximately 400,000 fry, were stocked in Pelican Lake, Guth said. In addition 200,000 were stocked in Mole Lake, an on-reservation lake.

The Tribe is currently using about 2 acres of rearing ponds space in three separate ponds to raise fingerlings. About 50,000 fry were distributed among the four small rearing ponds.

The Tribe has been producing walleye fry over the past four years, Guth says. They began with the acquisition of one Big Redd and then added another Big Redd two years ago doubling their capacity.

In addition, the Tribe is continuing with a cooperative rearing agreement with 3 private hatcheries which will split fingerling production with the Tribe on a 50-50 basis.

The hatchery will stock 60 acres plus under these agreements at a DNR-proposed rate of 40,000 fry per acre.

Guth states that the Sokaogon Band is trying to solicit hatchery money in order to expand the present operation. While walleye reproduction and stocking is important to the Band, Guth said, it does not always top the priority list as the Tribe faces other needs.



Leonard Guth, Sokaogon Tribal Hatchery, releases walleye fry into Pelican Lake. (Photo by Amoose)

Lac Courte Oreilles Tribal Hatchery

1.5 million walleye fry produced

Expansion of the current Lac Courte Oreilles hatchery facility is underway and will serve to provide the growing operation with additional rearing facilities and a permanent building.

The new site will include four rearing ponds: two one acre ponds and two 1/2 acre ponds, according to Leslie Ramczyk, LCO conservation director.

The expanded rearing space will accommodate the fry-producing capacity of the hatchery's seven Big Redds, each with a potential of

hatching 1 million eggs.

While Lac Courte Oreilles (LCO) has long been involved in incubation and stocking of walleye, the current program has been in operation for the past three years under the supervision of Ramczyk.

The 1991 season yielded 1.5 million walleye fry for the Lac Courte Oreilles stocking program, Ramczyk says.

None of the hatched fry have been stocked as yet, but are being reared in ponds currently leased by the tribal hatchery. Stocking will occur this fall when the walleye fry reach fingerling size of 5"-7." LCO prefers stocking fingerlings to fry because of the increased survival rate.

Lakes which will receive the fish have not yet been determined. Ramczyk anticipates that the majority of the stocking will occur on on-reservation lakes.

However, she is working with the regional WDNR fish manager as to stocking needs and will receive the WDNR's recommendations.

The new hatchery, which is being constructed under a \$200,000 Community Development Block Grant, should be completed prior to next spring's operation, Ramczyk states.

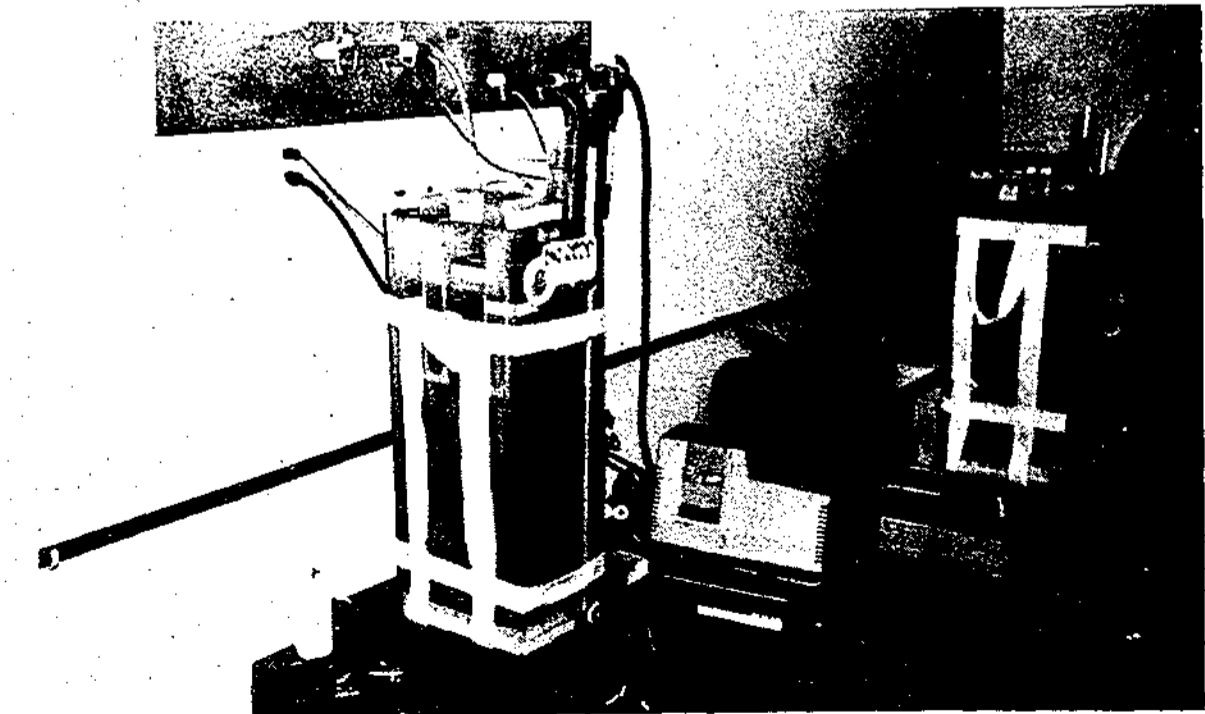


The construction of the rearing ponds is in process and going along well, Ramczyk comments, although some difficulty was encountered in obtaining appropriate clay liners for the ponds. The new facility should be complete for spring 1992.

The LCO Hatchery will continue to concentrate on walleye reproduction for the next couple years, according to Ramczyk. However, she envisions the hatchery producing other species in the future.

At this point LCO's hatchery is geared towards stocking rather than any commercial efforts.

Ramczyk is assisted in her conservation program by four conservation wardens and a secretary-dispatcher. Expansion of the hatchery does not signify an expanded staff at this time, Ramczyk says, however, the hatchery has benefited from the WCC program and its crew.



Housed in a temporary facility, LCO maintains a hatchery operation using Big Redd Units for incubation. A new facility including rearing ponds and a building are currently under construction and should be ready for next spring. (Photo by Amoose)

St. Croix Tribal Hatchery

260,000 walleye fry; 750 walleye fingerlings produced

The stocking goals of the St. Croix Tribal hatchery will enhance seven lakes in four counties this year, according to Beth Greif, St. Croix biologist.

Greif, who has been working with the St. Croix hatchery operation for the past three years, reports a 74% hatch-out rate from the two and one-half liters of eggs

incubated in the hatchery's Big Redds. St. Croix gathered the eggs through a netting process during the spring spawning season. Greif states that the Tribe has worked

cooperatively with the WDNR as they fyke net for assessment purposes and collect eggs from entrapped females. The hatchery has also collected eggs from speared walleye.

Of the hatched walleye fry, 260,000 have been stocked in Round Lake and approximately 700,000 have been placed into one large rearing pond and 52,000 into a small pond. Both ponds are being leased by the tribal hatchery.

Greif feels positive about the status of the fry in the ponds and reports that the rearing seems to be going well. She anticipates stocking to take place in: Big Round Lake, Polk Co.; Red Lake, Douglas Co.; and North Sand, Rooney Lake, Lipsett Lake, Yellow Lake and Sand Lake, all in Burnett County, this fall.

The St. Croix stocking program and hatchery have witnessed steady growth since 1980 when the Tribe first began stocking with purchased walleye fry and fingerling, Greif states.

The Tribe has been raising fish in rented ponds since 1987 and began incubation in 1989 with the purchase of Big Redds.

Tribal stocking totals over the past several years include: 1987-1990—207,000 walleye fingerlings; 1987-1991—469,000 walleye fry; 1988-1991—233,000 fingerling in a cooperative project with USFWS stocking in on and off reservation lakes.

Greif indicates that, while the emphasis off the hatchery is on walleye reproduction, they have also reared and stocked large amounts of largemouth bass over the past several years.

Greif, who works as the tribal biologist and program director, is assisted by the St. Croix conservation warden and seasonally employed fishery aides.

Needs continue to surface, she states, and the Tribe is always looking for additional funding for the hatchery. Rearing pond space is one priority, according to Greif, who, like other hatchery managers, dreams of greater capacity to stock fingerlings in preference to fry.

Overall, Greif is pleased with the successful 1991 season and is appreciative of the continuing support and backing from the tribal council as the hatchery grows.



Big Redds are used by the St. Croix Tribal Hatchery to incubate walleye eggs. (Photo by Amoose)

Keweenaw Bay Tribal Hatchery

15,000 whitefish fingerlings released

Responding with a positive effort to concerns over the status of the Lake Trout fishery in Lake Superior, the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (KBIC) has undertaken the project of developing a hatchery operation over the past several years.

In 1989 Mike Donofrio, fishery biologist for KB, launched a hatchery program at the request of the tribal council. Currently, they are awaiting word on a funding request for a new hatchery facility.

The hatchery operation, run by Donofrio and assistant Evelyn Smith, has been housed in a makeshift facility since its inception. Located in a 15' by 20' building which was formerly the tribal water plant, the hatchery has encountered both problems and successes.

In May 15,000 whitefish fingerlings were released into Keweenaw Bay from eggs that were collected last fall.

Donofrio and Smith, who also perform assessment netting for lake trout and whitefish population studies, collected eggs from netted fish. Eggs from both lake trout and whitefish were gathered and fertilized. 40,000 lake trout fry did not

survive due to problems with water chlorination.

However, Donofrio is optimistic about the survival rate of the stocked whitefish. He feels the stocked fingerlings will have a half-year headstart on the native fingerlings who have had to contend with cold temperatures and other environmental conditions.

Plans are underway for the construction of an entirely new hatchery on the KB Reservation which would eliminate many of the obstacles currently encountered and substantially expand the production capacity of the hatchery, Donofrio says.

A \$400,000 funding request has been submitted to Congress. The request which would provide a permanent site for the hatchery, and also includes a 50' by 120' building, or 6,000 square feet of hatchery space.

The plans envision the production of about 200,000 yearlings annually using three 8' cement raceways in the building for rearing. The proposed raceways would be 8 feet wide and 4 deep.

Ideally Donofrio would like to stock yearling size fish, which

would require rearing them for 18 to 24 months.

Word is being waited on the proposal at this time, however, Donofrio says he is optimistic about receiving funding towards the new facility.

Meanwhile, Donofrio is involved in surveying various sites

which would lend themselves to the new hatchery. Checking water quality and water supply is, of course, one critical component in site selection.

Eggs will again be gathered this October, both lake trout and whitefish, during the fall assessment process and incubated in the

Heath trays which are currently part of the hatchery equipment. The hatchery will also be using some hatching jar this year for the first season.

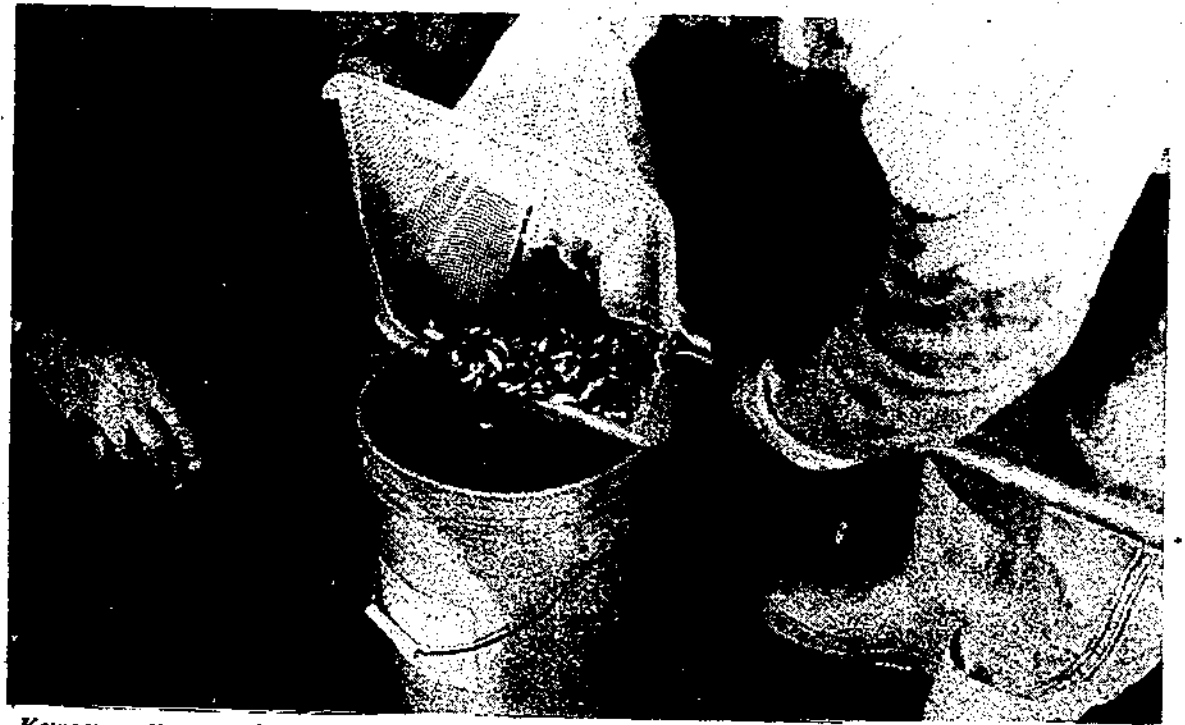
So, hatchery production will go on as the Tribe waits for the much needed funds that will turn the proposal into a reality.



Mike Donofrio, Keweenaw Bay, plants whitefish fingerlings into Lake Superior. (Photo by Amoose)



Leonard Guth, Mole Lake adjusts water temperature before stocking walleye fry. (Photo by Amoose)



Keweenaw Bay Hatchery staff prepare to plant whitefish fingerlings. (Photo by Amoose)



Bad River Hatchery staff seine for fingerlings. (Photo by Amoose)

Replenishing the Fishery: Chippewa Tribal Hatcheries is a publication of the Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC) Public Information Office. For further information call (715) 682-6619 or write: GLIFWC, Public Information Office, P.O. Box 9, Odanah, WI 54861.

CREDITS
 Sue Erickson.....Staff Writer
 Amoose.....Photography
 Lynn Spreutels.....Layout



Planting walleye in Lake Namekagon are representatives from the Bad River Hatchery and Cable's Fish for the Future. (Photo by Sue Erickson)



Checking on walleye fry at the LCO Hatchery is Leslie Ramczyk. (Photo by Amoose)



Leonard Guth, Mole Lake adjusts water temperature before stocking walleye fry. (Photo by Amoose)



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