



## *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service News Release*

Daphne Ecological Services Field Office

P.O. Drawer 1190, Daphne, AL 36526

Media Contact: Kevin L. McIver, Public Affairs Specialist, (251) 441-5181, ext. 39

<http://daphne.fws.gov>

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### **U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and State of Alabama successfully conduct Cryopreservation of Endangered Alabama Sturgeon Genetic Material**

*Marion, Ala.* – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries recently cryogenically preserved genetic material from the only Alabama sturgeon in captivity in an ongoing cooperative effort to recover the endangered species.

Only one Alabama sturgeon, a male, is in captivity but the Service and the State of Alabama are conducting ongoing efforts along the Alabama River to capture additional fish.

According to Nick Nichols, Assistant Chief of Fisheries for the Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries, the Alabama sturgeon partnership between the Service and the State of Alabama was formed in the mid-1990s.

“It was about this time the Service was making the push for this fish to be placed on the endangered species list and the State was named as the lead agency in the effort,” said Nichols. “Funding was provided both for collection efforts and for preparing the Marion Fish Hatchery to undertake propagation work once enough fish had been captured.”

Once cited by *CNN* as “the rarest unprotected fish in the United States,” the Service listed the Alabama sturgeon as an endangered species in May 2000.

State fishery biologists injected the fish with hormones at Alabama’s Marion Fish Hatchery on March 27 to initiate milt production.

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Bill Wayman, a Service fisheries biologist detailed from the Warm Springs Regional Fisheries Center, Warm Springs, Ga., drew the samples for cryopreservation which was completed on March 29.

“The genetic material was cryopreserved according to a procedure previously used successfully with shovelnose sturgeon,” said Wayman. “Overall the effort produced nine 0.5 milliliter straws of frozen genetic material, which are now being held in the repository at the Warm Springs Fish Technology Center.”

Once a female is captured, the male’s cryopreserved genetic material can be used to fertilize the female and produce sturgeon offspring that could be released back into the wild.

State and Federal biologists will continue the effort next year to increase the amount of genetic material held in storage.

“Although the amount and concentration was less than anticipated, the effort was a success in that genetic material was able to be cryopreserved for future use,” said Wayman.

For more information on the Alabama sturgeon visit <http://daphne.fws.gov>.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System that encompasses more than 538 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 70 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 78 ecological service’s field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.