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Meet the Hatchery Staff

In this section of the newsletter for 2021, we are introducing FLNFH members to the four permanent hatchery staff, including Josh who started as Acting Manager in January and became Hatchery Manager in August, 2021. All four staff members are accomplished and experienced. We are lucky to have them in Leadville.

The following paragraph is a summary of **Josh's** history which he provided to the Friends Board of Directors.

I was born in Glenwood Springs and grew up in Eagle and the Durango area. After graduating high school, I moved to Sitka, Alaska for college; graduating with a degree in Aquatic Resources I ended up spending a total of 16 years in Alaska. At college I met my wife, an Oregon farm-girl, and we now have 3 children. We moved to Washington state in 2011 when I was first hired into the USFWS. I worked in two salmon hatcheries in WA, moving up from biologist to manager. Moving to WA was part of my long-term plan to be closer to our families in Oregon and Colorado. Eventually, I learned that Ed would be retiring at the end of 2020, and it might be a good time to visit and check out the area. The visit went better than I could have hoped, and I was asked if I would transfer over to work with Ed for a bit and be acting manager when he retired. I jumped at the opportunity (after first checking with my wife). I never thought I would be at Leadville NFH, the first hatchery I remember visiting as a kid, but it all worked out and our family is very happy to be here and excited about the future. We enjoy being outside camping, fishing, hunting, hiking, skiing, biking, riding motorcycles, exploring, and most other outdoors activities.



Josh



Josh and his dog Elle (Elle-e)

Paige is the hatchery Fish Biologist. She was hired away from the Hotchkiss National Fish Hatchery more than 12 years ago by our former hatchery manager, Ed Stege. She manages the day-to-day hatchery activities while also overseeing the summer stocking and helps to coordinate spawning of the greenback cutthroat trout. She grew-up in Kansas, but her parents often took the family to vacation in the mountains. It was during these trips that she realized she wanted to live and work in the mountains, especially the Rockies. After graduating from Kansas State University with a degree in Fisheries and Wildlife Biology, she worked with Atlantic Salmon as a Student Conservation Association intern in Massachusetts. Once the internship was completed, she moved south to Savannah, Georgia to work for 3 years at Fort Stewart where she studied and maintained Atlantic and short-nosed sturgeon. Then, she got the call to work for the USFWS in Hotchkiss which is in the western foothills of the Colorado Rockies. Close enough to the mountains to ski, hike, and camp. Moving to Leadville allowed her to live surrounded by mountain peaks. You will often see her feeding trout and maintaining raceways with her sweet dog, Millie.



Paige and Millie

Alyssa, a Biological Science Technician, has been at our hatchery for three years, primarily keeping the Wyoming toads healthy. These endangered amphibians arrive at the hatchery as toadlets, and Alyssa grows them into adults, making sure they continue to gain weight, pit tagging them when they reach adulthood, watching for diseases such as the chytrid fungus, and eventually boxing them up for transfer to the wild in Wyoming. She also travels to Wyoming to help with their release into approved recovery site locations. A big part of keeping the toads healthy is breeding and raising insects for their food. When needed, she helps with spawning and other duties around the hatchery. Alyssa's Bachelor of Science in biology prepared her for this position. She is originally from Illinois and earned her degree from the University of Illinois, Chicago. She likes Colorado and her work. Keep an eye out for her dog, Hank, who is frisky but shy.



Alyssa, holding a Wyoming Toad



Hank

Andrew's title is Facilities Operation Specialist, although he describes himself as a man of many talents in all trades. He does a little bit of everything around the hatchery, but especially fixing anything that needs fixing including ordering and purchasing the parts. Andrew is the only hatchery employee without a dog, but he does have ducks. Andrew grew up in Connecticut and earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Parks, Recreation and Tourism from Unity College in Maine. After college, until arriving in Leadville, he led a ping-pong-ball life moving from NE Montana to New Mexico to Georgia and Glen Canyon (twice). His position at Glen Canyon, with the National Park Service, meant he spent five years in the middle of no-where (Andrew's words) 50 miles by boat up-lake at the Dangling Rope marina. They were off the grid there, dependent on a 250 KW power system and their own drinking and wastewater systems, all which Andrew maintained. He is very happy to be where he has a permanent position and is no longer isolated from the world.



Hopefully you have enjoyed learning about the four people who keep the hatchery running smoothly. They are all congenial and out-going people, so greet them when you visit.

Hatchery Happenings

We were able to hold Pathways to Fishing for Lake County 5th graders in May. The students were welcomed by staff from the hatchery, the US Forest Service, Trout Unlimited, CMC Fly Fishing Guide students, and our Friends group. As usual, FLNFH provided the students with a hot dog lunch while the other adult participants provided education in fish life cycle, leave-no-trace camping, insects (a.k.a. fish food), casting, and knot tying. It was a successful day, enjoyed by all. It is always fun to have the children at the hatchery.

Due to the COVID-19 virus, Pathways was the only event we were able to hold on the hatchery grounds this year. First the Hatchery 5K was postponed and then canceled. Leadville chose to cancel their annual Boom Days celebration, so we didn't have a booth or participate in the Boom Days parade. However, we did participate in this year's Parade of Lights on December 3. Josh re-purposed a pirate-ship float which Ed Stege had built for the 2020 Boom Days parade. Because Boom Days 2020 was canceled, this was the virgin voyage of Ed's ship, and (possibly ??) the last float he will build for the hatchery. (FYI: Ed and Michelle are enjoying their retirement on the drier side of the Olympic Peninsula in Washington. They are close to a wildlife refuge, an Audubon facility, and a walking/bike trail.)

FLNFH Projects

By next summer, there will be new basketball and volleyball courts installed at the hatchery picnic ground. The standards, backboard, and nets have all been ordered and delivered. As soon as the ground thaws in 2022, the Friends and hatchery staff will be working to install them. Many people donated to this project in honor of Ed Stege's retirement.

The next project on our horizon is the creation of a pollinator garden. 2022 will be a year of planning.

Hatchery Happenings as reported to the FLNFH board By Josh Homer, Project Leader

The visitor center building was re-opened to the public in mid-summer. There is now a HEPA filter system in each room and new sanitation stations. Approximately \$5,000 in CARES act funding was used for these upgrades.

The hatchery stocked local waters with trout two to three times per week during the summer. Hayden Creek trout, which had been living on-site, were stocked into reservoirs and one stream throughout Colorado. Those greenback cutthroat trout which were retired from spawning were stocked into Joe Wright Reservoir.

The mature batch of Wyoming toads was introduced to the wild in their native territory in June, and new tadpoles were received. They have been growing well.

Spawning went well with all needs met for greenback and Hayden Creek cutthroat trout programs.

A 98% efficient HVAC system has been installed in all three houses and the office. Prior to this installation, heating these buildings made up one-third of the hatchery budget.

There should be no more heaving of the upper parking lot because a French drain has been installed which collects water in a perforated pipe. The water flows to a central collection point where a pump sends it to a drainage area.

If you walked the eastern half of the nature trail recently, you might have noticed some debris and down-hill erosion. This was due to a blockage in the drainage pipe from Lake 6. It took several days, but the blockage was removed and the lake levels returned to normal.

How to Contact the Friends

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Write: Friends of the LNFH, P.O. Box 1194, Leadville, CO 80461

View our website at: <http://friendsoftheleadvillernationalfishhatchery.org/>

Find us on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfTheLeadileNationalFishHatchery/>

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