

Red Feather Storage & Irrigation Newsletter – March 2017

Weather: Winter finally arrived in December with cold weather and lots of snow. Snowpack is above average, as measured at the Deadman SNOTEL measuring station: <http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/basin.html> but it's always the late spring snows that determine how much water we'll get. You can also view the current weather at www.redfeatherlakes.net. Here's to a wet spring!

Shagwa Update: We kept Shagwa closed this past year and conducted water quality tests at 5 locations every two weeks during the summer through our consultant, Aquatics Associates, Inc. The aerators were left off to help localize the sample results. The tests were run on many parameters, but of particular concern is that they showed E.coli was present throughout the summer. The level of E. Coli was always well below the State and EPA standard of 126 cfu/100ml, however the level increases from 0-9 in May up to 40 during mid-summer, and then returned to 0-4 by the end of August. This indicates the levels increased with cabin usage and that some sewage is entering the lake. While this is not at the level to be a human health hazard, it is sufficient to impact the fishery.

We took the next step in our investigation by retaining the services of Farnsworth Group to investigate the hydrogeology of the area and provide recommendations on a path forward. We contacted 70 neighbors surrounding Shagwa, to request they allow us to learn about their wells and sewage systems, including what testing had been done. We received cooperation from 25% of the cabin owners that were sent letters and none of them had identifiable issues. We'll reach out again to the remaining neighbors this summer. RFSI does not have any authority to inspect on private property without permission, nor to impose any repairs. We understand this issue is a major concern for neighbors & members, and we are wanting to help get any existing issues corrected. This summer we'll drain the lake to sample the lake bottom to understand its role in the problem. Until we can complete a plan that lays out the actions, costs and timeline that improves the water quality at Shagwa, we'll hold off restoring the fishery.

Fishing Report: Crystal Springs Trout Farm supplied all our trout for the 2016 season and will be supplying our fish for 2017. We try to maintain a balance of fish varieties (brooks, browns, cuts) through our stocking program which is dependent on availability from our supplier and the health of our lake fishery. In 2017, we'll be stocking catchable and trophy Rainbow in all lakes during the April and June stockings. 12-15" brooks will be stocked mid-year and Cutbows in the fall stocking in all lakes. Cutbows are a cross between cutthroats and rainbows and are more disease resistant. Last October we stocked 7"-9" Walleye at Apache to help biologically control the perch (see the rules about catching walleye). We experienced a great year of fishing last year and expect this year will be equally as good, with a good carry over of trophy fish for the 2017 season.

Yellow Rainbow Trout (Palominos): Crystal Farms is experimenting with raising Palomino trout. The Palomino are a hybrid rainbow trout that are not a Golden Trout. By genetic cross-breeding of rainbows; the Palomino colors will range from light green to yellow. The Palomino grow as fast as regular rainbow and seem to be more disease resistant. We will stock a few in Letitia and Nokomis this spring and if fishing member feedback is positive, next year's stocking will include additional Palominos with a uniform yellow color.

Nokomis Catch-and-Release: We received a considerable amount of positive feedback for the new fly and lure / one fish limit regulations implemented at Nokomis in 2016. It will be one or two more years before we can expect to see a consistent trout population greater than 18", but we're off to a good start.

Fishing Survey: We will be placing survey boxes with survey cards for members to fill out at Apache and Nokomis lakes this year. The purpose of the surveys is to determine the ratio of fish species caught and growth rates and give us better information for managing our fishing program.

Fishing Members Meeting: The Board will be hosting a meeting for all initiated and non-initiated fishing members from 10:00 AM-Noon on Saturday June 24th at the Community Building. Topics to include the changes at Nokomis, stocking program, boat storage, and an update on Shagwa. The board is very interested in feedback from fishing members on any subject related to our fishing program. Please join us!

Water Status: Last year was a more normal water year, and with the wet April we filled the lakes and did some spot re-filling as water became available. The outlook for 2017's runoff is good with a 130% snow pack level. If this continues there should be sufficient water to fill the lakes this spring.

Construction Outlook: During the spring of 2016 we removed the leaking outlet overflow tube at Apache and installed a concrete cutoff wall and trickle channel in the spillway. Last fall we did some dam maintenance work at Ramona. We have prepared construction drawings for a pipeline to replace the middle portion of the ditch between Ramona and Snake Lakes. This pipeline will increase the delivery flow rate to Letitia and Snake Lakes and eliminate seepage. Construction of the pipeline is planned for this fall.



Thistle: Last summer we hired a licensed applicator to treat the thistle around our waterways and dams, with an herbicide that is safe to apply around a fishery. The program was very successful during the first year. We will likely need volunteers in the fall to deadhead thistle blooms before they go to seed. It will take several years to bring the thistles under control.

Dues: Will remain the same as the past nine years. Several factors go into determining dues, such as the cost of fish stocking, patrolling, water, emergency funds and maintenance projects. The cost of fish will increase 4% over last year and our labor costs are also going up by ~11% annually for the next 4 years. We'll be looking very seriously at a dues increase for 2018 in order to keep up with the proposed projects and services for our members. As a reminder, if you're a regular member, you must pay at least inactive dues to keep your membership current.

Boat Storage: We are looking at a couple of our more congested boat storage areas and attempting to come up with ways to get out of the winter boat storage business, as these inevitably turn into abandoned boats long term. While we've tried to improve the Apache boat area, we still have too many boats there in semi-permanent storage. If you haven't used your boat at Apache (or any other lake) for more than a season, please remove it. We are looking for ideas on how to address boats being stored at our lakes - please give us your inputs.

Lake Patrol: Thanks to Bill Bagdonas (970-219-6967), Steve Hiller (970-218-9154), and Fred Ballard (970-222-8376) for last year's service. Everyone will be back for the 2017 season. We issued several violation tickets in 2016 and if you see a problem at any lake please contact one of the patrolmen, the office or a Board member. To assist the patrolmen we ask that if you are fishing from a boat or belly boat, or ice fishing; please write your name, date and guest pass name/ number on a paper and place it on your windshield so the patrolmen know who's out on the lake. Similarly, be sure to visibly wear your badge or guest permit at all times.

Office: Deb Buck continues as our office manager – thanks!

- For 2017, we will issue new badges. Paying your dues early will allow us to get your badges made and receipt back to you before the season opens and will eliminate office delays. We appreciate receiving your dues transactions by mail (PO Box 527, RFL, 80545).
- We're investigating taking credit cards as a form of payment. We expect to make this available in the office later this year.
- Lost and Found: Please be courteous to all our members by turning in lost and found items to the office with the date and lake where items were found. If you have lost an item, please check with the office.

Ice Fishing: Ice fishing will again be allowed at Ramona and Apache for the 2017/2018 season. Member fees: adult season pass - \$50, child season pass \$15, adult and child daily pass - \$10. Guest passes: escorted adult - \$25, escorted child - \$10, unescorted adult guest passes are not allowed. Please put your name(s) on a paper and place it on your car dashboard so we know who's out on the ice.

2017 Calendar:

May 13	Member fishing season opens!
May 27	Guest Fishing opens
June 24	Fishing Member Forum, 10 AM-Noon at the Community Bldg
June 29-July 1	Ramona is closed to fishing until 2:00 PM on July 1 st
October 31	Fishing season closes
Winter	Ice fishing on Ramona and Apache is open from mid-December through early March, safe ice permitting

Office Information:

Phone: 970-881-2175
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E-mail: rfsico@yahoo.com
Web: www.rfsi.org
Hours: May 6 through September 4
8 AM to noon – Monday, Wednesday and Saturday
4 PM to 8 PM – Friday
After September 4 (Labor Day), the office will be open
only Saturdays, 8 AM to noon, through the end of October

Board of Directors:

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The Board wishes to thank you for your continuing support, and will do everything possible to make this an enjoyable summer.

Greg Pickerel
President, Red Feather Storage & Irrigation Company