

Red Feather Storage & Irrigation Newsletter – March 2019

Weather: Winter finally arrived in December with cold weather and limited snow. Snowpack is at average levels, 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: Will open for fishing on May 11 (along with the rest of the lakes)! Shagwa will remain a catch and release lake. During 2018, we added some fish habitat structures to the bottom of the lake. We filled it in May and completed installation of the new aeration system in October. We stocked fathead minnows in June, stocked crayfish in August, and stocked a few grass carp in September as part of our long-term biological control of moss. After the ice goes off in March, we'll stock the lake with Donaldson rainbows. This variety of rainbows is more expensive but grows a bit faster than some of our other varieties. Donaldsons are an aggressive fighting fish and prone to jumping more when hooked. Our plan is to also stock a few brook trout. Overall, we'll stock more slowly to allow the minnows, crayfish and insects to establish themselves in the fishery.



Shagwa Caution and Fish Survey: Please be careful wading Shagwa as the depth of the lake and the contour has changed significantly. You will not be able to wade fish the lake as in the past. Shagwa is a new and much different lake than in the past with an improved fishery. We will be asking members to fill out surveys this year in order to determine the success of our stocking plan and the health of the fish. Since Nokomis has the same regulations, surveys comparing the two lakes will provide an opportunity to compare two similar fisheries. As a result, we will be able to track growth rates of two rainbow varieties, monitor the food source and help with our fishery management program. Please help us by filling out the surveys at both Shagwa and Nokomis, feel free to write comments on the back of the survey cards.

Fishing Report: Crystal Springs Trout Farm supplied all our trout for the 2018 season and will be supplying all but the Donaldsons at Shagwa in 2019. Our fish biologist recommends 125-150 pounds of trout per surface acre feet of water in order to maintain a healthy fishery. We monitor the fish population through our patrolmen's creel reports and observing the general growth and health of our trout population. We try to maintain a balance of fish varieties through our stocking program which is dependent on availability from our supplier and the health of our lake fishery. In 2019, we'll be stocking catchable and trophy Rainbow, Cutbows, Palominos, Brooks and Browns in all lakes except Shagwa (see above), during the April and June stockings. Cutbows are a cross between cutthroats and rainbows and are more disease resistant.

Fish Survey: We began an angler survey in 2017 for Apache and Nokomis, to gain insights about our fisheries and help us with our overall management plan. This year we will include Shagwa in our surveys. Specifically, we're looking at the impact of perch and mitigation methods (walleye in Apache), trout growth rates, and catch-and-release in Nokomis. The surveys indicated there was a 40% increase of 12"-19" trout caught in Nokomis in 2018 compared to 2017, a more comprehensive fishing report for 2018 will be posted at the office and on our web page. We'll need at least three years of data and ask that you take the time to fill out the survey cards at all three lakes. Please feel free to write additional comments on the back of the cards.

Palomino Trout: Palomino Trout are a color variation of the Rainbow Trout and are the result of the crossing of a Golden Rainbow Trout (not the same as the western Golden Trout) and a Rainbow Trout. The Golden Rainbow originated from a single rainbow trout that was spawned in West Virginia. Palomino trout are known for their aggressive feeding, fast growth rate and resistance to some diseases. Due to their bright color, they can be spotted from a large distance, consequently susceptible to predatory birds.

Lake Patrol – Rules & Violations: Thanks to Fred Ballard (970-222-8376) and Erika Williamson (970-222-0450) for last years' service. In spite of increasing the cost of violations, we still have a few members bending the spirit of the rules. Key issues are – trespassing, guests (members are responsible for them!) and possession limits. We're closely enforcing the rules, and as always appreciate members bringing to the patrolman's attention if you see a problem at any of the lakes or ditches. 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 2019, we will issue new badges. Paying your dues early will allow us to get your badges 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 now accept credit cards as a form of payment. A service charge will be assessed.
- 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.

Water Status: Last year was a fairly normal water year, but it took several large spring snows to fill our lakes. Our new pipeline to Snake improved delivery efficiency to Snake and Letitia. The outlook for 2019's runoff is uncertain at this point. Deadman has below average snowpack, and the state as a whole is in a drought. This may affect our ability to fill our lower priority lakes.

Boat Storage: As we've discussed for several years, we have a number of boats left at our lakes that show years of non-use, are abandoned, or unregistered. Having no way to tell what's active or inactive, we're taking the approach to clean everything up every year. Last fall we completed phase 1 of our effort by removing all the boats at Apache (see the before/after pictures). This year we're adding Erie, Nokomis and Letitia to our clean-up efforts. This fall we'll contact all owners of boats at the four lakes and take one of three actions:

- Remove any unregistered boats (owners who can describe their boat can bail them out of our "boat yard")
- Give boat owners until Oct 31 to remove their boat (and not to another lake). Should you need help we'll have a couple people who can move your boat for a fee
- Or the boat owner can pay \$150 to store their boat where it is for the winter

Always register your boat! In 2020, we'll add Hiawatha to our annual clean-up efforts.



Boating Recreation: We've been having larger crowds of watercraft on the lakes, to the point of disrupting the anglers (who've paid to use the lake). We're seeking input about creating a boating recreation membership. For example - How do we administer it (by person or watercraft)? Does it have a guest provision? Who's eligible for a membership (RF residents only, others)? What's the cost? Please send your thoughts to the office. Our goal is to achieve fairness, we'll of course keep you posted as this takes shape.

Thistle: Last summer we again hired a licensed applicator to treat the thistle around our waterways and dams, with an herbicide that is safe to apply around a fishery. We started spraying a bit late last summer, but still got good results. We will begin earlier this year. Thistle seeds remain viable for many years, just waiting for the right soil and moisture conditions. Hence, we expect to continue spraying well into the future.

Ice Fishing: Ice fishing will again be available at Ramona and Apache for the 2019/2020 season. Member fees: adult season pass - \$80, child season pass \$20, adult day pass \$20, and child day pass - \$15. Guest passes: escorted adult - \$30, escorted child - \$15, unescorted adult guest passes are not allowed. Due to limited office hours, please buy your passes before Oct 31 or by mail well in advance. Please put your name(s) on a paper and place it on your car dashboard so we know who's out on the ice.

Lynn Fey: One of our long-time former board members passed away this January. He served on the board for 24 years, 16 as the Secretary and over 18 years as our "ditch rider" managing the water. We so appreciated all his contributions and express our condolences to his friends and family.

2019 Calendar:

May 11 Member fishing season opens!
May 25 Guest Fishing opens
July 4-6 Ramona is closed to fishing until 2:00 PM on July 6th
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:

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Hours: May 4 through September 2
8 AM to noon – Monday, Wednesday and Saturday
4 PM to 8 PM – Friday
September 4 through October 31
8 AM to noon – Wednesday and Saturday
November through April – by appointment only

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