

Red Feather Storage & Irrigation Newsletter – March 2021

Weather: Winter has been cold and windy, with very little snow. The snowpack is below average, as measured at the Deadman SNOTEL measuring station, <http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/basin.html>. We'll need significant late spring snows to break the drought cycle we're in. You can view the current weather at www.redfeatherlakes.net. Here's to an overly wet spring!

Cameron Peak Fire: First of all – a big shout out to all the fire fighters and personnel who worked so hard to keep the fire at bay from Red Feather. While we didn't have an active role fighting the fire, Ramona was a key source for much of the water transported to the northern area of the fire. The RFLVFD estimated it pumped about 900,000 gallons (2.75 acre feet) of water from the lake to fill temporary tanks and mix fire retardant for helicopter drops. This spring we'll look at how much the fire burned the headwaters area of North Lone Pine Creek and what the subsequent impact is on the water quality in the creek. For that reason, we'll do water quality sampling at our headgate and then take any necessary actions. Additionally, we'll look at how the fire affected the headgate and our pipeline above Bellaire.

Recreational Boating: Last year we started our new recreational boating program and made several rule changes. While there were several initial questions about "how it works", overall, it ran quite smoothly and largely met our goal to provide boating for members only. We sold 6 recreational boating memberships and 160 boating passes. And while that sounds like a lot, the overall impact to the lakes was neutral as most of the boating was by members, and the few residents who joined to recreationally boat were offset by removing outside boaters who aren't part of our program. We also saw much better compliance with PFDs (life jackets), which is what we wanted to accomplish given the variety of watercraft users.

As a reminder, key aspects of our boating program are:

- All boaters must have a valid badge to boat, either a fishing badge, guest fishing badge or a boating recreation badge. Simply stated – "no badge, no boating".
- All boaters must follow all RFS&I rules. See page 2 of the rules for all the details.
- Recreation Boating Badges can be purchased (limit 2) as part of a fishing membership. These are assigned to the primary named fishing member who is responsible for assuring that the boater wearing the badge understands and follows all rules.
- We're also offering an Annual Boating Membership for residents of Red Feather Lakes. Residents are those within our initiated membership area that are either property owners or long-term renters. These boating memberships get two boating recreation badges with their names on them. They do not get any of the other benefits that fishing memberships get. And like fishing memberships, they agree to follow all RFS&I rules.

Fishing Report: Crystal Springs Trout Farms supplied trout for all lakes except Shagwa in 2020. Aquatics Associates supplied the Donaldson trout for Shagwa as well as grass carp for all the lakes in 2020. Both suppliers will be providing our fish this year. Crystal Springs will provide cutbows, palominos, (see picture) and rainbows, and will keep prices the same as 2020. They do not have browns or brooks available this year, so we are looking at other sources for affordable varieties. Although the fires affected fishing access in late summer/early fall, fishing feedback throughout the season were overall very favorable. The Donaldson rainbows at Shagwa and Palominos in the other lakes are doing well. The special regulations the board put in place at Nokomis have proven to be very successful. The number of 20+” trout caught in Nokomis this year, increased significantly to 73 vs the 9 caught in 2019, see survey results below. We are cutting back on the number of trout we stock in Nokomis to help maintain a healthy trout population. Although we have not stocked brook trout for a few years, some nice 16-19” brooks were caught last year in a few of the lakes. Erie is our main brown trout fishery, producing most of the brown trout caught last year. The majority of last year’s supply of browns were stocked in Erie, the remaining were stocked in Nokomis.

Surveys: Thank you to the members who took the time to fill out the surveys. The board analyzes the surveys every year to determine the growth of our trout population and health of each fishery. The Shagwa surveys give us a good comparison of growth rates between the Donaldson and other varieties, specifically Nokomis. The Apache and Nokomis surveys provide us with data on trout growth and perch populations in a lake with special regulations and a lake without special regulations. Although we are not surveying all our lakes, we feel the data we collect from these three lakes provide us with insights on the overall health of all our lakes.

2020 survey results – 66 at Apache, 87 at Nokomis, 62 at Shagwa

| <u>Lake</u> | <u>12-15”</u> | <u>16-19”</u> | <u>20”+</u> | <u>Trout kept</u> | <u>Walleye caught</u> | <u>Perch caught</u> |
|-------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|-------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Apache | 271 | 92 | 23 | 45 | 31 | 8 |
| Nokomis | 443 | 301 | 73 | 6 | NA | 42 |
| Shagwa | 200 | 76 | 48 | 2 | NA | NA |

The board encourages members to complete the survey forms at Apache, Nokomis and Shagwa in 2021. We are receiving good data from the surveys that help with our fishery management. Please feel free to include comments on the back of the surveys.

Ice Fishing: Ice fishing will again be available at Ramona and Apache for the 2021/2022 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 guests 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.

Water Status: Last year saw the beginning of the current drought. We were fortunate to fill the lakes, but the absence of any significant rain during the summer took its toll. The outlook for 2021's runoff is concerning. No doubt, we'll need several significant late spring snowstorms to fill the lakes.

Lake Patrol – Rules & Violations: Thanks to Fred Ballard (970-222-8376), Kevin Zimmerman (970-222-0450), Randy Gross (970-218-9154) and Shanna Kiefer for last years' service. Shanna will be leaving us and the board thanks her for the great work. Kevin and Randy will be our main patrol staff this summer with Fred filling in as needed. **Be sure to read and familiarize yourself with this year's rules!** We take issues like trespassing, guest violations, and badge misuse seriously and always appreciate members bringing issues 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: After six years of wonderful service, Deb Buck will be leaving us – thanks Deb for all your help and service! In her place we'll have a new office manager, Allison Harrell, please extend her a warm welcome!

- For 2021, we'll issue new badges. Paying your dues early allows us to get your badges back to you well before the season opens and streamlines our office workload. We appreciate receiving your dues transactions by mail (PO Box 527, RFL, 80545).
- We accept credit cards. Note, a service charge will be added to cover credit card fees.
- 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.

Covid-19 Procedures: Due to the pandemic, we changed our office and patrol procedures. These changes worked without any incidents to our employees thus far. We expect that 2021 will operate with much the same procedures, until the health department tells us otherwise. Thanks to all our members for your patience and support!

Boat Storage: Due to the disruption caused by the fire, we were unable to do our year-end boat clean-up at the lakes. The previous year's clean-up effort was a big help at Apache, Erie, Letitia, and Nokomis. In 2021, we'll add Hiawatha to our annual clean-up efforts. In the fall we contact all boat owners at all the lakes and take one of three actions:

- 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.
- Remove any unregistered boats (owners who can describe their boat can bail them out of our "boat yard" for \$200) – **be sure to register your boat and have a sticker on it!**
- Or the boat owner can pay \$150 to store their boat where it is for the winter.

2021 Calendar:

| | |
|------------|---|
| May 8 | Member fishing season opens! |
| May 29 | Guest Fishing opens |
| July 1-3 | Ramona is closed to fishing until 2:00 PM on Saturday, July 3 rd |
| October 31 | Fishing season closes, boats must be removed from the lakes |
| Winter | Ice fishing on Ramona and Apache is open from mid-December through early March, safe ice permitting |

Office Information:

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| Phone: | 970-881-2175 |
| Mail: | PO Box 527, Red Feather Lakes CO 80545 |
| E-mail: | rfsico@yahoo.com |
| Web: | www.rfsi.org |
| Hours: | May 1 through September 6 8 AM to noon – Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday 4 PM to 8 PM – Friday September 8 through October 31 8 AM to noon – Wednesday and Saturday November through April – by appointment only |

Board of Directors:

| | |
|------------------|--------------|
| Greg Pickerel | 970-556-9814 |
| David Mosnik | 970-217-4822 |
| Paul Barker | 970-223-7653 |
| David Frydendall | 970-484-3457 |
| Mike Calhoon | 970-567-7273 |
| Joe Jacklovich | 303-819-5254 |
| Roger Svendsen | 720-480-3947 |

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