

Red Feather Storage & Irrigation Newsletter – March 2023

Weather: Winter was slow to arrive, but now it's cold, windy, and moderately snowy. The snowpack is slightly above average at the Deadman SNOTEL measuring station, <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/wcc/home/snowClimateMonitoring/snowpack/basinDataReports/>. We'll need our usual late spring snows to give us sufficient water for our lakes. You can view current weather at www.redfeatherlakes.net. Here's to a wet spring!

Fishing Report: Crystal Springs Trout Farms supplied trout for all lakes except Shagwa in 2022. Aquatics Associates supplied the Donaldson trout for Shagwa as well as grass carp for all the lakes in 2022. Both suppliers will be providing our fish this year. Crystal Springs will provide cutbows, palominos, and rainbows, but prices will be 25% higher in 2023. In Nokomis, we added an additional 1500 pounds of rainbows and palomino mix and 250 brook trout over the past two seasons to bring the trout inventory close to historical numbers. If we have a normal year of growth in Nokomis, we should see an increase in the number of 20" plus trout this year. We have a source of brown trout to stock in Nokomis this year but are not sure if there will be available inventory to stock in other lakes. We were not able to secure any walleyes for our normal stocking at Apache this past fall.



Nokomis Perch: Since the winter kill of 2021, the perch population has thrived at Nokomis. This is due to very few trout in the lake during the early spring perch spawning. We have worked with our Fisheries Biologist to evaluate options to mitigate the perch population. We have ruled out chemical mitigation and have decided biological mitigation is our best option with the use of predator trout varieties such as browns and palominos. We do have a source for brown trout to stock in Nokomis this year and also expect the rainbows and palominos to feed on the spawned perch this spring. We had a similar problem when perch were first found in Apache. We opted to use biological rather than chemical mitigation at that time. It took three to five years of stocking brown trout and walleyes to begin to control the perch population to a reasonable level. It also appeared the rainbows were beginning to feed on the spawned perch.

Dues: After no dues increases for five years, we're implementing a ~14% dues increase effective for the 2023 summer fishing season. Over the past five years (2018-2022), inflation was up 19%, the price of fish was up 21%, and labor was up 26%. This means initiated memberships will increase \$60/year, uninitiated \$100/year, and guest passes by \$5. Ice fishing will increase \$10/year and \$5/day. Boating memberships will increase \$30. Junior and grandchild memberships and junior guest passes will not increase. See the 2023 dues sheet for all the new amounts. As a reminder, if you're a regular member, you must pay at least the now \$230 inactive dues to keep your membership current.

Fishing Member Meeting: Periodically, we like to invite anglers and boaters to come share their inputs, ideas, and feedback on our fishing and boating programs. This year we'll *host a meeting* on July 22, 10AM at the POA Building. If you're unable to attend and want to share an input, please send us an email.

Water Update: Last year we had a challenging water year. We cycled through about 3 calls on the river and never could fill all the lakes. We were significantly helped by our water transfer (see photo) out of the Elkhorn. However, it took a fair amount of maintenance and effort to make it perform to design due to all the debris from the Cameron Peak Fire.



Maintenance Projects: Last fall we wrapped up a number of minor maintenance projects – further Elkhorn diversion and Bellaire ditch work, Hiawatha fish trap improvements, ditch work, access roads, storage shed repair, fish feeder stand removal, toe drain cleaning.

Boat Storage and Auction: Last fall we removed 5 boats from our five boating lakes, with the majority coming from Apache and Hiawatha. Only one of the boats was properly stickered. As always, we'll remove any boats after October 31, upon which you'll need to pay to bail it out of our yard.

We now have quite a collection of boats in our “boat yard” and like we did in 2014, we'll be holding a sealed bid sale for members only of all the boats except the five we collected in 2022. We will accept sealed bids for the boats from June 10 through June 25. Detailed bidding information will be available at our office and web page, beginning May 6. Preview dates to look at the boats will be provided on the bidding instructions. And of course, we cannot guarantee the seaworthiness of any boat.

Lake Patrol – Rules & Violations: Andrew Godfrey and Dan Spelts will be returning to our patrol staff in 2023. We would like to add a third patrol person to fill in as a substitute and help during the holidays. The number of member violations were down last year and all were handled through verbal warnings. Non-member violations were also down last year. As you know, 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 improve the reporting process, we will go to an on-call phone number that will be forwarded to the patrol person on duty. To assist patrol staff, we ask that if you are fishing from a watercraft or ice fishing; please print your name, mobile phone number, 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: Our office manager, Allison Harrell, did a great job managing the office, thanks!

- For 2023, 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. Dues and fee amounts for 2023 are shown elsewhere in this newsletter.
- Lost and Found: Please be courteous to all our members by turning in lost items to the office with the date and lake where items were found. If you lost an item, please check with the office.

Ice Fishing: Ice fishing will again be available at Ramona and Apache for the 2023/2024 season. Member fees: adult season pass - \$90, child season pass \$20, adult day pass \$25, and child day pass - \$15. Guest passes: escorted adult - \$35, escorted child - \$15, unescorted adult guests are not allowed. Due to limited winter office hours, please buy your passes before Oct 31, 2023; or well in advance by mail. Please put your name(s) and mobile phone number on a piece of paper and place it on your car dashboard when you're out on the ice.

Recreational Boating: This past year was the third season with our new recreational boating program. Our goal of having only boaters who are part of our program and following our rules (especially PFD compliance) has worked beyond expectations. We had 14 recreational boating members (3 more than last year), and 139 boating passes (down a bit from last year).

Lake and Fishing information: On our web page, at www.rfsi.org/lakes.html, we have considerable information about our lakes (history, contour maps, overview information) and fishing (management of the fisheries and the challenges we deal with). For example, here's part of the summary we have about Letitia.

Letitia is one of our most productive fisheries. It has a wonderful eco-system for plankton which supports all the bug hatches that happen during the season. It supports a variety of trout, rainbows, cutbows, palominos, brooks, and browns. Its moderate depth and prolific ability to grow water plants (from algae to rooted aquatic plants), has led us to control them with both chemicals and grass carp. It has access along all shorelines except in a couple marshy areas. It's one of our boating lakes, with a put-in point on the south side. Because there are many easy access fishing areas, bait fishermen enjoy spending time there. And with its larger size, it's popular for fly fishing from a boat or float tube.

2023 Calendar:

May 13 Member fishing season opens!
May 27 Guest Fishing opens
June 29 – July 1 Ramona is closed to fishing until 2:00 PM on Saturday, July 1st
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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Hours: May 6 through September 4
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4 PM to 8 PM – Friday
September 6 through October 31
8 AM to noon – Wednesday and Saturday
November through April – by appointment only

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

Greg Pickerel
President, Red Feather Storage & Irrigation Company