

## **“Big Head Carp and Grass Carp Management Activities: 2010”**

NJDFW assisted with a reclamation project involving the eradication of carp from spring-fed ponds in the Wickecheoke Creek Preserve (Huey property) in Hunterdon County. The owner, NJ Conservation Foundation (NJCF), first requested our assistance in 2008 when they received a report from an angler that carp were in the ponds (the previous owner maintained a fish farm). Fish and Wildlife confirmed that bighead and grass carp were still present and reproducing in the series of eight inter-connected ponds. These non-native species can spread quickly after introduction, become very abundant, and hurt native fishes and aquatic ecosystems either by damaging habitats or by consuming vast amounts of food.

To prevent the spread of these undesirable species into the creek (and ultimately the Delaware River and its tributaries) NJCF, in consultation with BFF, developed a plan to reclaim the ponds and they secured all the necessary permits (aquatic pesticide, pesticide product registration, water lowering, scientific collecting, and fish stocking). Permitting and other issues delayed plan implementation until 2010.

In May 2010 Fish and Wildlife conducted an electrofishing survey to determine if carp had escaped into the adjacent stream, an unnamed tributary to Wickecheoke Creek, and adjacent waters impounded by beavers and no carp were found. NJCF noticed unusual shells from bivalves inhabiting the ponds and with the help of the ENSP it was determined to be a non-native Asiatic floater species that is known to use carp, and possibly other fish species, as a host fish during their life cycle.

The decision was made to eradicate all the fish, rather than salvage desirable fish species (sunfish) and risk accidentally transferring the non-native species into other waters. In June, NJCF partially lowered the ponds and a licensed pesticide applicator (hired by NJCF) applied a rotenone-based pesticide that killed all the fish inhabiting the ponds. BFF loaned equipment and staff assisted with the collection of dead fish. A total of 1028 carp (950 bighead carp, 78 grass carp) and other assorted fish species were removed from the ponds.

Plans exist to drain the ponds and leave them dry over the 2010-2011 winter period to allow the pond substrate to freeze and thereby kill any remaining floaters. In 2011 NJDFW will stock the ponds with suitable warmwater fishes (sunfish and bass) to establish desirable recreational fisheries for public angling.”