



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Region 3 - Great Lakes/Big Rivers

Leadership in Conserving, Enhancing, and Restoring Aquatic Ecosystems

Pendills Creek National Fish Hatchery

Brimley, Michigan



Series of Fish and Wildlife Service photos depicting Pendills Creek National Fish Hatchery activities: (Top Row, Lt. to Rt.) An early November view of the hatchery building and outdoor, covered raceways; Headstart students receive a hands-on fishy experience during fish marking operations; Maintenance Mechanic John Shuman spends much of his winter clearing snow; (Middle Row, Lt. to Rt.) Biologist Faber Bland removes dead eggs from an incubator tray to keep fungus growth minimized; La Crosse Fish Health Center Director Rick Nelson discusses the semi-annual fish health inspection with Biologist Tracy Roessner; Raceway cleaning is a routine job to keep fish healthy; (Bottom Row, Lt. to Rt.) Pendills Creek's largest fish transport truck can haul up to 3300 pounds of 5 inch fish; These "eyed" lake trout eggs are close to hatching; Look carefully and you can see yearling lake trout hugging the bottom of the raceway.

Pendills Creek National Fish Hatchery

The Pendills Creek National Fish Hatchery (NFH), located in Michigan's Upper Peninsula near Brimley, Michigan, was established in 1950 and has contributed greatly to the restoration of lake trout populations in the Great Lakes.

Approximately 800,000 lake trout yearlings are reared at Pendills Creek annually. Mid-April marks the beginning of the stocking season but this doesn't mean that all the fish will be taken from Pendills immediately. There are three Federal lake trout hatcheries in the Great Lakes/Big Rivers Region that work together to stock approximately 3.7 million fish annually. Fish are hauled with distribution tank trucks from the hatcheries to the offshore stocking vessel, M/V Togue. Then they are put into tanks on the boat and taken to sites that have historical lake trout spawning habitat. All fish from this hatchery are stocked into Lakes Michigan and Huron.



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Early each spring employees mark lake trout yearlings prior to stocking by removing a certain fin(s). Marking, known locally as fin-clipping, allows biologists to identify fish as a hatchery product providing critical information for lake trout rehabilitation in the upper Great Lakes.

The annual production cycle for this hatchery starts with receipt of 225,000 eyed lake trout eggs from nearby Sullivan Creek NFH in December. These eggs are incubated and hatched in Heath trays, and then the sac fry are moved into small indoor tanks. They remain inside until mid-June, or until there is room in one of 16 large, outdoor raceways. In May and June, the hatchery also receives approximately 900,000 fingerling lake trout from the Jordan River NFH which are placed directly into outdoor raceways.



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Pendills Creek National Fish Hatchery Staff
Left to Right: Crystal LeGault, James Anderson, Faber Bland, Tracy Roesner, John Shuman, Curt Friez

With this shipment of fish, all of the stocking commitments for the following spring will be achieved.

The second week of March starts the fin-clipping season at Pendills. All fish must be marked before they are stocked to identify them as a hatchery product. Up to eight people are hired for this operation. Marking fish is just one part of the restoration plan objectives developed by natural resource agency partners in the Great Lakes Basin.

Unlike most hatcheries, the water that flows through the Pendills Creek NFH is not a constant temperature. It fluctuates between 33° F in the winter to 68° F in the summer. The fish are under an inch or more of ice in near freezing water and do not feed for at least one full month in the winter. Most of the weight gain occurs during the summer and the spring when water temperatures rise. The staff has developed a culture program which adds extra body fat to the fish during warm water periods when fish are aggressively feeding so they easily endure the long winter periods of cold water. Liquid oxygen supplementation and sediment filtration systems are being designed to enhance water quality and guarantee high quality fish for the restoration programs and increased production.

For detailed information about the Pendills Creek National Fish Hatchery, contact the office at (906) 437-5231 or visit their website at: http://midwest.fws.gov/Fisheries/site-pendills_hiawatha.htm