

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Impact of Wolf Creek Dam Seepage Rehabilitation Project on
Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery
Frequently Asked Questions
January 23, 2007

An emergency decision has been made by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to drop the level of Lake Cumberland behind Wolf Creek Dam, maintaining a 680-foot elevation for the remainder of this year. The Corps plans to reevaluate lake levels in the September – October 2007 timeframe for next year's operation.

The FAQ's below address the impact of this decision on Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery.

Note: For questions regarding impact to the lake fishery, contact the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources at 1-800-858-1549. For questions regarding the dam, contact Bill Peoples with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at 615/736-7161 or visit <http://www.lrn.usace.army.mil/pao/issues/WOLcommo/>.

Q1. Is Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery going to close?

A1. No, Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery is not going to close. There will be no job losses. The hatchery and Visitor Center will continue to be open during normal operating hours.

Q2. How will the hatchery be impacted by the reduced water level?

A2. The hatchery has three water intakes on Wolf Creek Dam. They exist at 680 feet, 643 feet, and 618 feet. The normal winter pool for Lake Cumberland is 690 feet and the normal summer pool is approximately 725 feet. If the lake level drops to 680 feet, the top intake will no longer be available, so water flow through the hatchery will decrease.

Despite a reduction in flows, we anticipate minimal impact during the winter months, when Lake Cumberland is usually at its lowest level (690 feet). Oxygen levels and water temperatures will remain ideal for trout production.

Potential impact to the hatchery's fish production would occur in the warmer months of spring, summer, and fall. In order to maintain the water level at 680 feet throughout the year, the Corps will need to release colder, more oxygenated water from the deepest area of the lake after each rainfall, causing the water flowing to the hatchery to have increased temperature and decreased oxygen content. This could impact the overall carrying capacity of the hatchery and the number of fish that could be reared at the hatchery.

Q3. What will happen to the hatchery's fish production?

A3. The hatchery will make every effort to continue current fish production levels. The hatchery is part of the National Fish Hatchery System which produces over 9 million rainbow trout each year, and involves the expertise of Fish Health Centers and Fish Technology Centers nationwide.

This valuable network will assist the hatchery with potential fish production problems resulting from the reduced water levels.

At this point, the hatchery expects to continue to meet commitments to State and Tribal partners. Wolf Creek NFH annually rears over 800,000 rainbow trout and brown trout. The hatchery provides mitigation stocking rainbow trout for stocking in tailwaters of 13 U.S. Army Corps of Engineer impoundments across six different river basins in Kentucky. Fish are also provided to support the State trout program encompassing over 250 miles of trout streams. More information about the hatchery's stocking program can be found at <http://www.fws.gov/wolfcreek/>.

Q4. Will the hatchery still host events this year?

A4. All events will be held as scheduled. The hatchery will host the dedication for the new Environmental Education and Visitor Center in April. The annual Catch a Rainbow (<http://www.kidscatcharainbow.org/>) event will be held in June.

Q5. What is the hatchery's economic impact?

A5. The hatchery provides \$75 million in indirect economic benefit annually. Rainbow trout production alone at Wolf Creek NFH creates more than 400,000 angler days. This generates nearly \$16 million in retail expenditures, creates over 300 jobs with \$7 million in wage and salary income, and provides nearly \$2.4 million annually from taxes to local, state and federal coffers.