

Natchitoches

National Fish Hatchery



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Karen Kilpatrick, Hatchery Manager
Jan Dean, Assistant Hatchery Manager
 615 South Drive
 Natchitoches, LA 71457
 Phone: 318/352 5324
 FAX: 318/352 8082
 Email: karen_kilpatrick@fws.gov
 Web: <http://natchitoches.fws.gov>

Hatchery Facts

- Established: May 21, 1930, under the authority of the White Act, 46 Statute 371, to produce largemouth bass, redear sunfish, bluegill, and catfish for local public waters and farm ponds.
- Current production programs can be grouped into three categories: Recovery (pallid sturgeon), Restoration (striped bass and paddlefish), and Recreation (largemouth bass, bluegill, and channel catfish). The culture of alligator snapping turtles began in 2004, and in 2005 work with the endangered Louisiana Pearlshell Mussel began.
- Acres: 98 land acres; 46 surface acres for fish production (53 ponds).
- Only federal fish hatchery in the State of Louisiana.

Hatchery Objectives

- Develop spawning and rearing techniques for the endangered pallid sturgeon.
- Develop and improve spawning and culture techniques for the paddlefish.
- Restore depleted populations of striped bass.
- Improve recreational fishing opportunities on federal lands.
- Develop environmental and cultural education programming that promotes the Service's natural resource mission, utilizes hatchery facilities as an outdoor classroom for all Natchitoches Parish schools, and highlights the cultural and natural resource relationships between the Service, the Caddo Indian Nation, and the societal impacts of fishing.

Management Tools

- Six intensive culture systems for spawning and holding species of special concern.
- Fifty three ponds for extensive culture of a variety of species.
- Four in-pond raceways for the culture of anadromous and/or freshwater riverine species.
- Cooperative work efforts with the SARP; the Pallid Sturgeon Recovery Team; USGS National Wetlands Research Center; and the natural resources divisions of the states of Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Alabama.

Hatchery Production (2004)

Pallid Sturgeon	1,569
Paddlefish.....	134,909
Striped bass/Atlantic	70,881
Largemouth bass	1,168,039
Channel catfish	200,891
Bluegill	<u>764,744</u>
Total for FY04	2,341,033

Public Use Opportunities

- 10,000 visitors annually.
- 9,000 gallon, 16 tank public aquarium featuring live exhibits of native southeastern fish and reptiles as well as static displays honoring the hatchery site as a historical Caddo Indian village and linking the Service's commitment to cultural and environmental stewardship.
- K-12 environmental education programming using hatchery as an outdoor classroom.

- Birdwatching.

Financial Impact of Hatchery

- Seven person staff.
- Current year budget (FY06) \$642,000.

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Other

F.I.S.H. – Friends In Support of the Hatchery established in 2000 to support educational and program objectives of the hatchery and the Service's Fisheries Program. For more information, contact: Debbie Waskom, President, 318/357 1623.

Questions and Answers

What is a fish hatchery?

Federal fish hatcheries have been part of our nation's resource management efforts for more than 100 years. Hatcheries can be warm water, cool water or cold water facilities. Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery is a warm water station that spawns, hatches, and raises young fish to a size and age which provides them with the best chance of surviving in the wild. These fish are raised to help sustain populations in the wild until suitable habitat can be reestablished and the populations can sustain themselves.

What kind of fish do you raise?

Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery raises six species of fish. We work with striped bass, paddlefish, pallid sturgeon, largemouth bass, bluegill and channel catfish. The bass, bluegill and catfish are raised to promote recreational fishing on national wildlife refuges. The striped bass and paddlefish are raised to restore depleted populations of these species in the Lower Mississippi River Basin. The pallid sturgeon are raised as part of the National Recovery Plan because they are an endangered species.

Isn't the paddlefish a catfish?

Because of their smooth skin paddlefish are often mistaken for a species of catfish. They are nicknamed spoonbilled catfish even though they are not related to any catfish species.

Do you sell fish to private land owners?

Although once a function of the National Fish Hatchery system, "farm pond" stocking is no longer considered a Federal responsibility. In addition to the shift in responsibility, enough private

aquaculturists began raising farm pond species that free stockings were affecting business.

In 1989 the Fish and Wildlife Service officially ended the Farm Pond Program. Now individuals can contact the hatchery office to obtain a listing of local and statewide fish farmers who can provide fish for their farm ponds.

What do sturgeon eat?

The pallid sturgeon prefers extremely turbid waters and strong currents where they feed on insects and small fish. The pallid is listed as an endangered species and faces many of the same problems as the paddlefish (another species raised at Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery): contaminants from agriculture and industrial runoff and habitat destruction.