



**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**  
**Dwight D. Eisenhower National Fish Hatchery**  
*Draft Recreational Fishing Plan*  
*March 2020*



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March 2020**

**United States Department of the Interior  
Fish and Wildlife Service  
Dwight D. Eisenhower National Fish Hatchery  
4 Holden Road  
North Chittenden, VT 05763**

**Submitted:**

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**Project Leader** **Date**

**Concurrence:**

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**Complex Manager** **Date**

**Approved:**

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**Assistant Regional Director, Fish and Aquatic Conservation** **Date**

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## **I. Introduction**

Dwight D. Eisenhower (DDE) National Fish Hatchery (NFH) is part of the U.S. and Wildlife Service's (Service) Fish and Aquatic Conservation (FAC) program. The FAC program works throughout the country to restore habitat across the landscape, prevent and control invasive species, assist Native American Tribes and other partners in managing their fish and wildlife resources, advance fisheries and aquatic sciences and technologies, foster outdoor recreational opportunities, educate the public on the economic and ecological benefits of aquatic species and their habitats, and address new and emerging challenges—such as climate change.

DDE NFH (formerly the Pittsford NFH) is a 35-acre Service-owned, cold-water aquaculture facility located in the Green Mountains of North Chittenden in Rutland County, Vermont. The site is located less than a mile east from Pittsford and 6.8 miles northwest of Killington, Vermont. The property contains a hatchery combination building, a public restroom, forty fish culture raceways, multiple storage buildings, two residences, picnic tables, a fish display pond, visitor parking areas, and a gated entrance road. Access to the hatchery is via Holden Road.

On March 3, 1891, Congress authorized the establishment of a fish hatchery in Vermont that became St. Johnsbury Federal Fish Hatchery (26 Stat. 964), of which DDE NFH was a substation. DDE NFH was authorized by Congress on June 30, 1906 and constructed in 1909 to produce brook trout, char, and Atlantic salmon for stocking the waters of Vermont, New York, and New Hampshire (34 Stat. 721). From 1925 to 1940, DDE NFH was an experimental station focusing on culture of new species, fish nutrition, and selective breeding. The hatchery raised California golden trout, cutthroat trout, rainbow trout, brown trout, Loch Leven trout, lake trout, brook trout, Arctic char, and Arctic grayling during this time.

The process to rebuild DDE NFH began in 1956 (70 Stat. 889), and production resumed in 1959 producing trout for the North Atlantic-Appalachian Region of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. In 1968, the hatchery began raising sea-run Atlantic salmon for the Connecticut River Restoration Program, which ended in 2014. The hatchery began raising landlocked Atlantic salmon and lake trout for the Lake Champlain Restoration Program in 1980. Between 1999 and 2004, the hatchery started lake sturgeon production, a threatened species in New York, for release into the St. Lawrence River and Finger Lakes. In 2009, the name of the hatchery changed from Pittsford NFH to DDE NFH in honor of the 34th president who visited the hatchery in 1955 on a fishing trip. Currently the hatchery raises and stocks landlocked Atlantic salmon and lake trout for Lake Champlain and Lake Ontario, and brook and lake trout for Vermont waters.

Applicable laws, regulations, and policies which direct the operation and programs of the DDE NFH include the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (16 U.S.C. 661-667e; 48 Stat.401), as amended; Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1251-1376; 62 Stat. 1155), as amended; Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (16 U.S.C. 742a-742j, not including 742d-1; 70 Stat. 1119), as amended; the Refuge Recreation Act (16 U.S.C. 460k-460k-4); Lake Champlain Special Designation Act (33 U.S.C. 1251); Great Lakes Critical Programs Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-596; 104 Stat. 3000); Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 2901-2911; 94

Stat. 1322); the Code of Federal Regulations; and Fish and Wildlife Service Manual.

There is one recreational fishing opportunity associated with DDE NFH, Furnace Brook (Figure 1). Furnace Brook, the hatchery's primary water supply, is a clean, soft water stream with high oxygen content. The water brought into the hatchery from Furnace Brook provides the seasonal fluctuations in temperature, hardness, and pH that closely approximate what the fish would encounter in nature, which results in fish better adapted to their natural environment. Furnace Brook runs through and along DDE NFH's property as a high gradient mountain stream with a mean depth of 1.5 feet. This angling opportunity is governed by the State of Vermont fishing regulations.

The purpose of this document is to support bringing DDE NFH into compliance with Federal regulations by formally opening the station to public recreational fishing along Furnace Brook. It is a priority of the Service to provide for fish and wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities, including fishing, when those opportunities are compatible with the purposes for which the hatchery was established and the mission of the Service. The mission of DDE NFH is to "protect, conserve, and restore native fishes in the northeastern United States in order to sustain valuable fisheries and support recreational fishing for the benefit of the public."

## **II. Statement of Objectives**

The objectives of a recreational fishing program at DDE NFH are to provide:

- The public with access to Furnace Brook in accordance with all applicable State of Vermont recreational fishing regulations.
- The public with recreational activities to experience fish and wildlife on more hatchery lands and increase opportunities for anglers and hunters, especially for youth and families.
- Increased alignment with the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department (VTFWD) and a stronger association between State and Federal lands.

This recreational fishing plan is consistent with Secretarial Order 3356, "continues the Department of the Interior's efforts to enhance conservation stewardship; increase outdoor recreation opportunities for all Americans, including opportunities to hunt and fish; and improve the management of game species and their habitats for this generation and beyond." Therefore, the Service is proposing to allow public access for sportfishing from DDE NFH property to State waters of Furnace Brook in accordance with the State of Vermont fishing laws.

## **III. Description of Fishing Program**

### **A. Areas to be Opened to Fishing**

Recreational fishing is allowed on Furnace Brook from existing public access points on the

hatchery property in accordance with the State of Vermont’s fishing regulations, with additional hatchery-specific restrictions (described in Part IV). Fishing can be conducted along the banks of the hatchery property adjacent to Furnace Brook (Figure 1).

## **B. Species to be Taken, Fishing Seasons, Fishing Access**

The primary angling opportunities on Furnace Brook are for brook trout, rainbow trout, and brown trout.

Public fishing on Furnace Brook is conducted according to laws and regulations established and published by VTFWD, including licensing requirements, season dates, fishing methods, and harvest, with additional hatchery-specific restrictions (described in Part IV).

Anglers can use existing access points and parking lots to access fishing locations. Furnace Brook may be accessed by foot, as it runs through and along the hatchery property. The hatchery currently maintains access to a single, unpaved visitor-parking space for Furnace Brook adjacent to the bridge on Holden Road in the northern section of the property. During opening hours, access to another visitor parking lot is also provided through the gated and paved hatchery entrance road in the southern section of the property.

## **C. Fishing Permit Requirements**

Recreational fishing is conducted in accordance with current published fishing laws of Vermont, updated annually by the VTFWD (VTFWD, 2019). No additional permits are required beyond what is required by Vermont’s recreational fishing laws. Current State of Vermont’s fishing laws can be obtained from the VTFWD. State permits can be obtained online through the Department’s online hunting and fishing licensing system, in person through authorized license agents, or by mail.

VTFWD Address:  
VT Fish & Wildlife Department  
Agency of Natural Resources  
1 National Life Dr., Dewey Building  
Montpelier, VT 05620-3208  
(802) 828-1000

VTFWD Licensing Mailing Address:  
VT Fish & Wildlife License Center  
Agency of Natural Resources  
1 National Life Dr., Dewey Bldg.  
Montpelier, VT 05620-3208  
(802) 828-1190 or (802) 828-1191

Department Website: <https://vtfishandwildlife.com/>  
Licensing Website: <https://www.vtfwdsales.com>

## **D. Consultation and Coordination with the State**

National fish hatcheries conduct fishing programs within the framework of State and Federal regulations. All authorized fishing is regulated by the State of Vermont. This plan and the associated environmental assessment (EA) have been reviewed and are supported by the VTFWD. DDE NFH will continue to consult and coordinate with the VTFWD annually to

ensure the recreational fishing plan is consistent with State regulations.

#### **E. Law Enforcement**

State waters are under the jurisdiction of State law enforcement officers. Federal law enforcement officers may monitor the public use areas on hatchery property. Law enforcement officers may randomly check anglers for compliance with Federal and State laws.

#### **F. Funding and Staff Requirements**

The costs of maintaining public access to the State waters for recreational fishing comes out of the hatchery's annual budget. Expenses include program management, staff resources, boundary posting, signage, parking lot and road maintenance, facility maintenance, gate maintenance, and other fishing-specific activities.

### **IV. Conduct of the Fishing Program**

#### **A. Angler Permit Application, Selection, and/or Registration Procedures**

Other than fishing licenses required by Vermont law, anglers do not need a permit to access these waters. There is no fee or check-in required.

#### **B. Hatchery-Specific Fishing Regulations**

In addition to the laws and regulations established and published by the VTFWD:

- Anglers must abide by posted signage and remain 50 feet away from the water intake from Furnace Brook, raceways and fish culture areas for safety and to maintain biosecurity of stocked fish populations.
- Angling equipment including, but not limited to, live bait, boots, and rods near these areas is prohibited.
- Access to the hatchery parking lot is available during regular hours of hatchery operation. Outside of these hours, parking is limited to space available outside of the gate. Users are prohibited from blocking the gate.

#### **C. Relevant State Regulations**

Recreational fishing is conducted according to laws and regulations established and published by the VTFWD, including licensing requirements, season dates, fishing methods, and harvest with the exception of the hatchery-specific regulations (described above).

## **D. Other Hatchery Rules and Regulations for Fishing**

None.

## **V. Public Engagement**

### **A. Outreach for Announcing and Publicizing the Fishing Program**

To inform the public of the recreational fishing program, any updates will be posted at the hatchery office and on the hatchery website. Any outreach is intended to educate the public of the changes/updates to the fishing program; and inform the public where to get information regarding the program. The hatchery will also address public comments received and review them for incorporation into the recreational fishing plan.

### **B. Anticipated Public Reaction to the Fishing Program**

It is estimated that about 2,500 people visit DDE NFH annually. Visitors use the hatchery to enjoy public recreation such as photography, hiking, wildlife observation, picnicking, educational tours and events, and general fishing access. Visitors engaged in these activities have historically co-existed without conflicts. We anticipate that this will not change as a result of this administrative action.

We estimate that 1 to 2 people per day during the summer months could visit DDE NFH to fish recreationally on Furnace Brook. Visitors of the hatchery are expected to be supportive of the fishing program as it is expanding public recreational opportunities, according to the hatchery's mission, while still maintaining the integrity of the hatchery. Allowing recreational fishing at the hatchery would not cause a large increase in visitation, and would promote an appreciation of local natural resources.

### **C. How Anglers Will Be Informed of Relevant Rules and Regulations**

Angler orientation of the hatchery will occur by providing relevant information at the hatchery and on the hatchery website. There are also informational rule books for angling in Vermont available inside the administration building. Anglers may address questions to hatchery staff by calling, writing, e-mailing, or visiting the hatchery.

## **VI. Compatibility Determination**

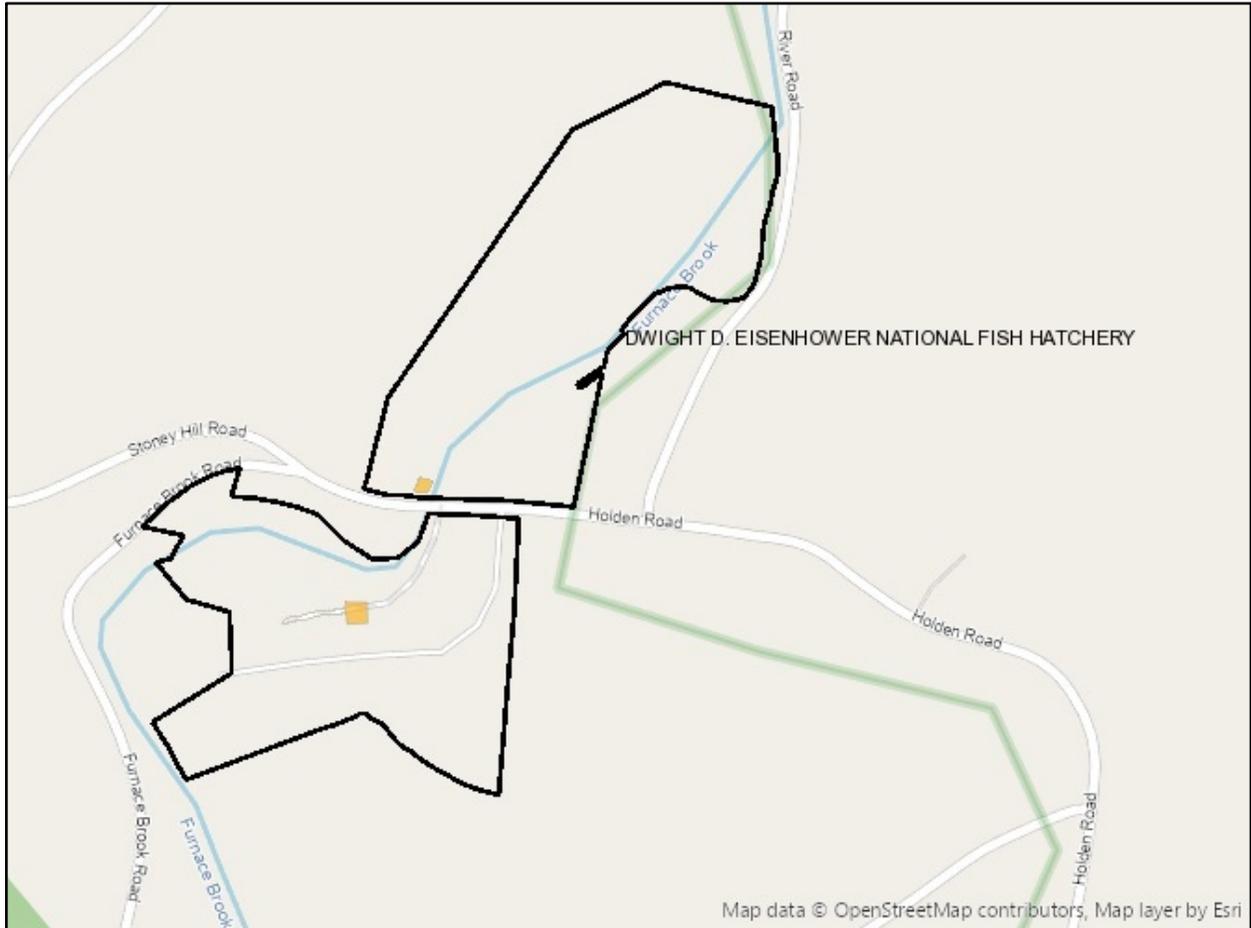
Under the proposed action, the Service's ability to reach its fish and wildlife population goals would not be negatively affected. Fishing activities proposed in the DDE NFH Recreational Fishing Plan are compatible with the purpose of the hatchery. Recreational fishing, as outlined in the plan, "is not detrimental to the propagation and distribution of fish or other aquatic animal life" (50 CFR Ch. 1 71) at DDE NFH.

## **VII. References**

Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department. (2019). *Vermont 2019 Fishing Guide & Regulations*. Vermont: Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department. Retrieved from <http://www.eregulations.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/19VTFW.pdf>

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. (2015). *Strategic Plan for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program: FY2016-2020*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior. Retrieved from [https://www.fws.gov/fisheries/pdf\\_files/FAC\\_StrategyPlan\\_2016-2020.pdf](https://www.fws.gov/fisheries/pdf_files/FAC_StrategyPlan_2016-2020.pdf)

**VIII. Figure**



**Figure 1. DDE NFH Boundary, Recreational Fishing Access (Furnace Brook), and Visitor Parking (Highlighted in Yellow).**

**Environmental Assessment for**  
**Dwight D. Eisenhower**  
**National Fish Hatchery**  
**Fishing Plan and Other Recreation**

This Environmental Assessment (EA) is being prepared to evaluate the effects associated with this proposed action and complies with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR 1500-1509) and Department of the Interior (43 CFR 46; 516 DM 8) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (550 FW 3) regulations and policies. NEPA requires examination of the effects of proposed actions on the natural and human environment.

**Proposed Action**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is proposing to continue allowing recreational fishing access on Dwight D. Eisenhower (DDE) National Fish Hatchery (NFH) in accordance with the hatchery's Recreational Fishing Plan and the State of Vermont's fishing regulations. The Proposed Action Alternative opens the public-use areas along Furnace Brook for recreational fishing access in accordance with all applicable State of Vermont fishing regulations. In addition, the Service is proposing to continue allowing other forms of public recreation such as photography, hiking, wildlife observation, and picnicking on public-use areas during opening hours of the hatchery.

**Background**

DDE NFH (formerly the Pittsford NFH) is part of the Service's Fish and Aquatic Conservation (FAC) program. The FAC program works throughout the country to restore habitat across the landscape, prevent and control invasive species, assist Native American Tribes and other partners in managing their fish and wildlife resources, advance fisheries and aquatic sciences and technologies, foster outdoor recreational opportunities, educate the public on the economic and ecological benefits of aquatic species and their habitats, and address new and emerging challenges—such as climate change.

On March 3, 1891, Congress authorized the establishment of a fish hatchery in Vermont that became St. Johnsbury Federal Fish Hatchery (26 Stat. 964), of which DDE NFH was a substation. DDE NFH was authorized by Congress on June 30, 1906 and constructed in 1909 to produce brook trout, char, and Atlantic salmon for stocking the waters of Vermont, New York, and New Hampshire (34 Stat. 721). From 1925 to 1940, DDE NFH was an experimental station focusing on culture of new species, fish nutrition, and selective breeding. The hatchery raised California golden trout, cutthroat trout, rainbow trout, brown trout, Loch Leven trout, lake trout, brook trout, Arctic char, and Arctic grayling during this time.

The process to rebuild DDE NFH began in 1956 (70 Stat. 889), and production resumed in 1959

producing trout for the North Atlantic-Appalachian Region of the United States. In 1968, the hatchery began raising sea-run Atlantic salmon for the Connecticut River Restoration Program, which ended in 2014. The hatchery began raising landlocked Atlantic salmon and lake trout for the Lake Champlain Restoration Program in 1980. Between 1999 and 2004, the hatchery started lake sturgeon production, a threatened species in New York, for release into the St. Lawrence River and Finger Lakes. In 2009, the name of the hatchery was changed from Pittsford NFH to DDE NFH in honor of the 34th president who visited the hatchery in 1955 on a fishing trip. Currently the hatchery raises and stocks landlocked Atlantic salmon and lake trout for Lake Champlain and Lake Ontario, and brook and lake trout for Vermont waters.

Applicable laws, regulations, and policies which direct the operation and programs of the DDE NFH include the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (16 U.S.C. 661-667e; 48 Stat.401), as amended; Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1251-1376; 62 Stat. 1155), as amended; Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (16 U.S.C. 742a-742j, not including 742d-1; 70 Stat. 1119), as amended; the Refuge Recreation Act (16 U.S.C. 460k-460k-4); Lake Champlain Special Designation Act (33 U.S.C. 1251); Great Lakes Critical Programs Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-596; 104 Stat. 3000); Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 2901-2911; 94 Stat. 1322); the Code of Federal Regulations; and Fish and Wildlife Service Manual.

National fish hatcheries are maintained for the fundamental purpose of the propagation and distribution of fish and other aquatic animal life, and managed for the protection of all species of wildlife (50 CFR Ch. 1 70.1). The mission and work of the National Fish Hatchery System is to "... improve[s] recreational and public use of aquatic resources, recovery of federally listed threatened or endangered species, restoration of imperiled species...and fulfillment of Tribal partnerships and trust responsibilities."

National Fish Hatchery System propagation addresses top priorities, such as:

- Enhancement of recreational fishing
- Enhancement of public use of aquatic resources
- Recovery of federally protected species
- Restoration of imperiled species
- Fulfillment of Tribal partnerships and trust responsibilities

As part of the National Fish Hatchery System, the mission of DDE NFH is to "protect, conserve, and restore native fishes in the northeastern United States in order to sustain valuable fisheries and support recreational fishing for the benefit of the public." It is a priority of the Service to provide for fish and wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities, including fishing, when those opportunities are compatible with the purposes for which the hatchery was established and the mission of the Service.

## **Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action**

Fishing is a healthy, traditional recreational use of renewable natural resources deeply rooted in America's heritage. Federal laws and the Service's policies permit fishing on national fish hatcheries when those activities are compatible with the purposes for which the hatchery was established and the mission of the Service. The purposes of these proposed actions are to: (1) formally open DDE NFH to public recreational fishing access so that recreational angling can occur at the hatchery consistent with hatchery's Recreational Fishing Plan; and (2) formally allow other recreational activities that currently occur on the hatchery such as photography, hiking, wildlife observation, and picnicking during opening hours of the hatchery. These actions are aligned with the purpose of Secretarial Order 3356 to increase access to public lands for hunting, shooting, and fishing, and put a new and greater emphasis on recruiting and retaining new sportsmen conservationists, with a focus on engaging youths, veterans, minorities, and other communities that traditionally have low participation in outdoor recreational activities.

The need of the proposed actions is to meet the Service's priorities and mandates as outlined by the Secretary of the Department of the Interior to "recognize compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses as the priority general uses of the Federal Lands and "ensure that opportunities are provided within the National Fish Hatchery System for compatible wildlife-dependent recreational..."

Recreational fishing and outdoor recreational activities are priority public uses of the FAC program as identified in the core goals of the *Strategic Plan for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program: FY2016-2020* (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, 2015).

## **Alternatives Considered**

### **No Action Alternative - Station Closed to Recreational Fishing and Other Recreation**

Under the No Action Alternative, DDE NFH would be closed to public recreational fishing access and other forms of recreation such as photography, hiking, wildlife observation, and picnicking. This alternative is being included in the EA for analytical purposes only, as under the status quo, recreational fishing and other listed recreational uses currently occur at the hatchery. For the purposes of this analysis, under the No Action Alternative, the hatchery would be closed to public fishing access and other recreational uses. Implementation of this alternative would not facilitate wildlife-dependent priority uses that have been found to be compatible with the purposes of DDE NFH and the mission of the National Fish Hatchery System.

### **Proposed Action Alternative – Station Open to Recreational Fishing and Other Recreation**

The Proposed Action Alternative opens public access to Furnace Brook for fishing on DDE NFH in accordance with the hatchery's Recreational Fishing Plan and the annually-updated laws and regulations established by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department (VTFWD), including licensing requirements, season dates, fishing methods, and harvest (VTFWD, 2019). The following additional hatchery-specific restrictions are in place on public fishing access:

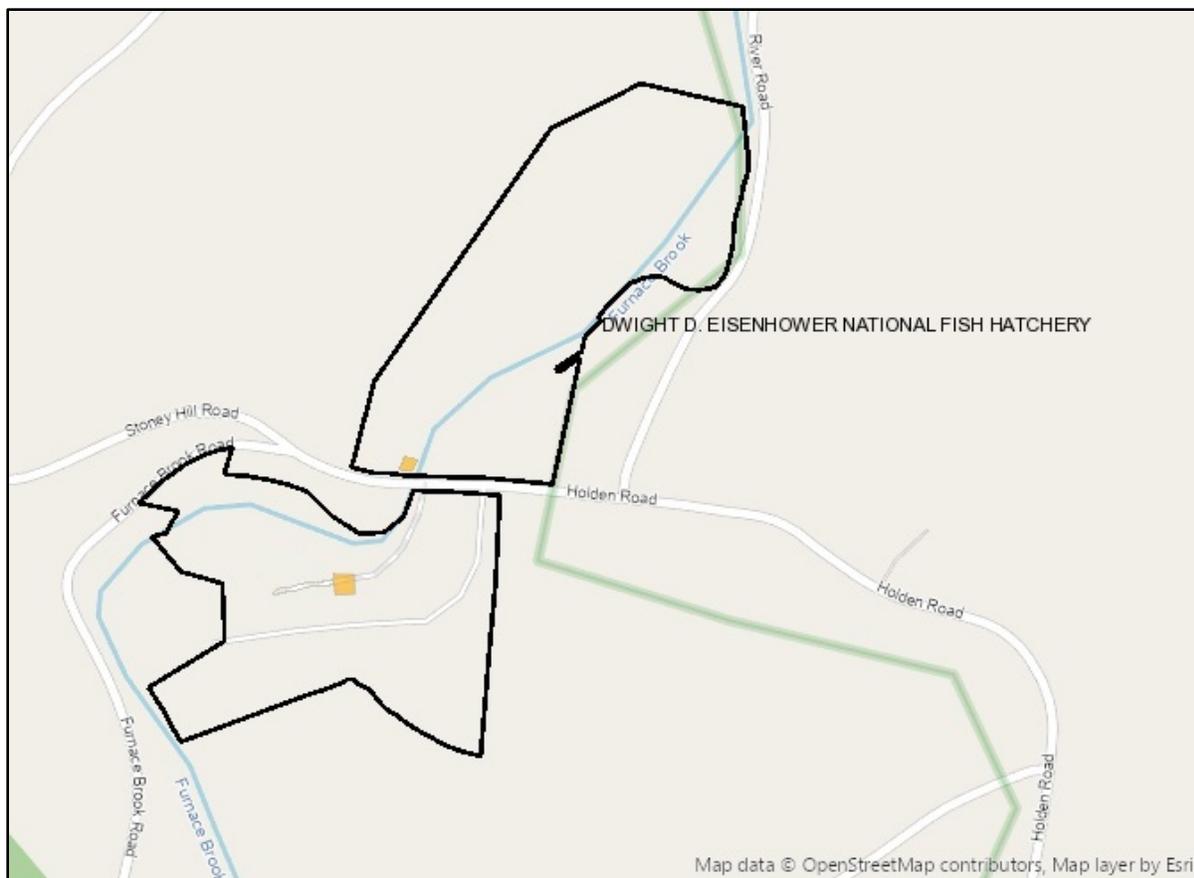
- Anglers must abide by posted signage and remain 50 feet away from the water intake from Furnace Brook, raceways and fish culture areas for safety and to maintain biosecurity of stocked fish populations.
- Angling equipment including, but not limited to, live bait, boots, and rods near these areas is prohibited.
- Access to the hatchery parking lot is available during regular hours of hatchery operation. Outside of these hours parking is limited to space available outside of the gate. Users are prohibited from blocking the gate.

The Proposed Action Alternative also formally allows other forms of recreation such as photography, hiking, wildlife observation, and picnicking (referred to as “other listed forms of recreation” in this document) during opening hours on DDE NFH property.

### **Affected Environment**

DDE NFH is a 35-acre Service-owned, cold-water aquaculture facility located in the Green Mountains of North Chittenden in Rutland County, Vermont. The site is located less than a mile east from Pittsford and 6.8 miles northwest of Killington, Vermont. The property contains a hatchery combination building, a public restroom, forty fish culture raceways, multiple storage buildings, two residences, picnic tables, a fish display pond, visitor parking areas, and a gated entrance road. Access to the hatchery is via Holden Road.

There is one recreational fishing opportunity associated with DDE NFH, Furnace Brook (Figure 1). Furnace Brook, the hatchery’s primary water supply, is a clean, soft water stream with high oxygen content. The water brought into the hatchery from Furnace Brook provides the seasonal fluctuations in temperature, hardness, and pH that closely approximate what the fish would encounter in nature, which results in fish better adapted to their natural environment. Furnace Brook runs through and along DDE NFH’s property as a high gradient mountain stream with a mean depth of 1.5 feet. The hatchery currently maintains a single, unpaved visitor-parking space for Furnace Brook adjacent to the bridge on Holden Road in the northern section of the property. During opening hours, access to another visitor parking lot is also provided through the gated and paved hatchery entrance road in the southern section of the property. This angling opportunity is governed by the State of Vermont fishing regulations.



**Figure 1. DDE NFH Boundary, Recreational Fishing Access (Furnace Brook), and Visitor Parking (Highlighted in Yellow).**

Other listed forms of recreation are allowed on the public-use areas within hatchery property during opening hours of DDE NFH, which are available on the hatchery’s official website and subject to change.

**Environmental Consequences of the Action**

This section analyzes the environmental consequences of the action on each affected resource, including direct and indirect effects. This EA focuses on analyses of the environmental consequences on a resource when the impacts on that resource could be more than negligible and therefore considered an “affected resource.” Resources that will not be more than negligibly impacted by the action have been dismissed from further analyses.

Impact Types:

*Direct effects* are those which are caused by the action and occur at the same time and place.

*Indirect effects* are those which are caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance, but are still reasonably foreseeable.

*Cumulative impacts* result from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions.

### **Impacts to Fish Populations**

The primary angling opportunities in Furnace Brook are species such as brook trout, brown trout, and rainbow trout, which the hatchery regularly stocks for recreational fishing opportunities.

#### ***No Action***

For the purposes of analysis, the No Action Alternative considers DDE NFH property closed to recreational fishing access and other listed forms of recreation. Anglers would not have public access to Furnace Brook within the bounds of Service lands, and human activity would be decreased significantly. Therefore, there would be no impact from recreational fishing and other recreation uses to fish species or populations.

#### ***Proposed Action***

The Proposed Action Alternative considers DDE NFH officially opened for recreational fishing access and other listed forms of recreation. These listed forms of recreation besides fishing are not anticipated to affect fish populations since they currently occur on land and have minimal contact and interference with fish populations with no significant adverse effects on aquatic species. However, recreational fishing potentially could cause negative impacts to fish populations if it occurs at unsustainably high levels or is not managed properly.

Potential impacts from fishing include direct mortality from harvest and catch and release; injury to fish caught and released, changes in age and size class distribution, changes in reproductive capacity and success, loss of genetic diversity, altered behavior, and changes in ecosystems and food webs (Lewin et al. 2006, Cline et al. 2007). Recreational fishing may also lead to introduction of non-native fish that may negatively affect native fish, wildlife, or vegetation. State waters are under the jurisdiction of VTFWD law enforcement officers, and Federal law enforcement officers may monitor the public-use areas on hatchery property. Law enforcement officers may randomly check anglers for compliance with laws and regulations of the State of Vermont to help reduce the potential for unwanted introductions.

In general, anglers tend to target older and larger fish which tend to have greater reproductive capacity. Their selective removal may reduce the population's overall reproductive success. Catch and release fishing can also have impacts on individual fish, including injury and immediate or delayed mortality. The likelihood of mortality depends on type of fishing gear used, where the fish was hooked, how the fish is handled, angler experience, and environmental conditions. Fish caught and released with non-lethal injuries could be exposed to parasites, or bacterial or fungal infections. Handling fish also increases stress, which may lead to changes in physiology and behavior (Lewin et al. 2006).

Since fishing generally removes individuals from a population, at high levels it can lead to reduced population sizes and loss of genetic diversity. The loss of genetic diversity can ultimately reduce a population's fitness, resilience, and ability to adapt to environmental changes and stressors. The higher the fishing mortality, the greater these types of impacts will be (Lewin et al. 2006).

While fishing does remove individuals from the population, we do not anticipate that the projected level of fishing pressure will affect the fish population in Furnace Brook, as the hatchery regularly stocks Furnace Brook to ensure sustainable populations. All fishing regulations (including catch limits aimed at ensuring sustainable populations) are to be consistent with current Federal and the State of Vermont's regulations. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that there will be no negative effect on affected fish species or populations on a regional and continent-wide basis. The State of Vermont strives to ensure maintenance of healthy and diverse fish species populations. Anglers must abide by the State seasons, catch limits, and regulations to protect the fish populations. Recreational angling has been occurring on Furnace Brook for many decades and the fishing pressure at DDE NFH is projected to be sustainable.

### **Other Wildlife and Aquatic Species**

#### ***No Action***

For the purposes of analysis, the No Action Alternative considers DDE NFH closed to recreational fishing access and other listed forms of recreational activity. There would be much reduced public recreational fishing on Furnace Brook and reduced human activity on hatchery property; therefore, there would likely be reduced impact to other wildlife and aquatic species.

#### ***Proposed Action***

The Proposed Action Alternative considers DDE NFH officially opened for recreational fishing access and other listed forms of recreation. Therefore, fishing has the potential to increase disturbance to wildlife that use Furnace Brook, including waterfowl and wading birds. The fishing season in Vermont coincides in part with spring and early summer nesting periods for many species of waterbirds. Human activity, such as photography, hiking, wildlife observation, and picnicking has the potential to affect the behavior, distribution, and abundance of waterbirds due to disturbance. Although disposal of trash is prohibited, there is some limited risk of fishing gear being lost which could result in bird, reptile, or amphibian entanglement. All recreational users are expected to follow a "carry in, carry out" trash policy in which all visitors take their trash with them when they leave Federal property.

Disturbance from recreational activities vary with the wildlife species involved and the activity's type, level, frequency, duration, and the time of year it occurs. Anglers and other recreational users may disturb nesting birds by approaching too closely to nests, causing nesting birds to flush. Flushing may expose eggs to predation or cooling, resulting in egg mortality. Anglers can use existing public-use areas to access the recreational fishing. Given the habitat types near the public-use areas and observation from staff, anglers would have minimal effect on nesting birds of conservation concern. No species of concern have been observed nesting in areas that anglers would utilize. Hatchery staff would close areas, as needed, to fishing if sensitive nest sites were

ever to occur.

### **Threatened, Endangered, and Other Special Status Species**

To check for effects on threatened, endangered, and other special status species as a result of the proposed actions, DDE NFH coordinated with the New England Ecological Services Field Office. An official species list was obtained through the Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) online regulatory review tool. There are few threatened, endangered, or special status species that occur in the vicinity of DDE NFH, including the northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*) and the Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*). In addition, bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940, have been observed flying over hatchery property.

#### ***No Action***

For the purposes of analysis, the No Action Alternative considers DDE NFH closed to recreational fishing and other listed forms of recreation. While there would be much reduced public recreational fishing on Furnace Brook and reduced human activity on hatchery property, existing State and Federal laws are in place to protect threatened, endangered, and other special status species. Therefore, there would be no impact from recreational fishing and other forms of recreation to these species under the No Action Alternative.

#### ***Proposed Action***

The Proposed Action Alternative considers DDE NFH officially opened for recreational fishing and other listed forms of recreation. DDE NFH evaluated the species of concern found in the vicinity of the hatchery. The determinations are summarized below.

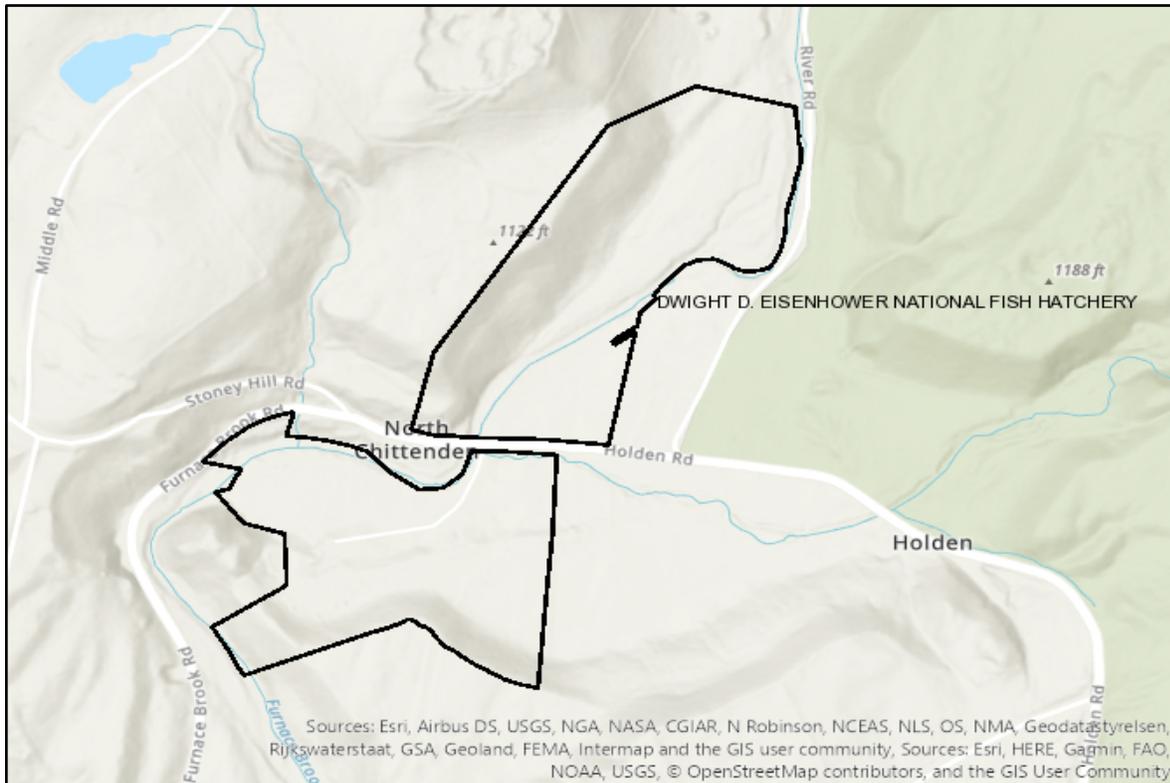
The northern long-eared bat is listed as federally threatened throughout the State of Vermont with the exception of larger cities such as Burlington. The Indiana bat is listed as federally endangered in parts of western Vermont, including Rutland County. Opening DDE NFH to recreational fishing and other listed forms of recreation on public-use areas does not impact or interfere with crucial habitat for bats, such as trees. Therefore, effects to northern long-eared bats and Indiana bats are not anticipated as a result of the proposed actions.

Bald eagles are observed regularly near hatchery property, but do not nest on hatchery grounds. Therefore no impact to bald eagles is anticipated as a result of the proposed actions.

Public fishing and other listed forms of recreation are not anticipated to have a negative impact on threatened, endangered, or other special status species. Thus, the Service designates a ‘no effect’ determination for the species in the official species list, including the northern long-eared bat, Indiana bat, and bald eagle. Where potential exists for impacts attributable to public access from DDE NFH, the staff can minimize disturbance by implementing area closures or restrictions such that threatened or endangered or at-risk species are not impacted by fishing and other recreational activities.

## Geology, Soils, and Vegetation

DDE NFH property is located within the Green Mountain massif (Figure 2). Soils consist of sandy-loam with small to large cobble and boulders consisting of gneiss, schist, quartzite, and limestone. The watershed of Furnace Brook is located primarily within the Green Mountain National Forest and consists of 10,580 acres, of which 95 percent is forested primarily with hardwoods. Residential and commercial development within the watershed is minimal, composing of 0.02 percent. Pastureland Accounts for approximately 3 percent of the watershed.



**Figure 2. Topographical Map of DDE NFH in North Chittenden, Rutland County, Vermont.**

### ***No Action***

For the purposes of analysis, the No Action Alternative considers DDE NFH closed to recreational fishing access and other listed recreational activities. Therefore, there would be no impact from recreational fishing or other recreation to vegetation or soils on the hatchery property.

### ***Proposed Action***

The Proposed Action Alternative considers DDE NFH officially opened for recreational fishing access and other listed recreational activities.

A moderately sized stream, Furnace Brook receives a fair amount of fishing pressure by anglers on hatchery property, with approximately 100 angler days per year. The majority of observed

bank erosion along Furnace Brook is caused by flash flooding and runoff. Bank erosion from foot traffic may affect/alter riparian vegetation and habitat and increase aquatic sediment loads of streams, however this erosion is anticipated to be minimal. Additionally, current levels of use by visitors and anglers (approximately 1 to 2 anglers per day during the summer months) at the access points have been sustainable and the hatchery has not observed adverse effects on vegetation and soil. Other listed recreational uses have also historically existed on hatchery property without adverse effects on the vegetation or soils. Therefore, we do not anticipate soil erosion to increase because of foot traffic related to fishing and other recreation.

### **Visitor Use and Experience**

DDE NFH currently experiences approximately 2,500 visitors per year for fish and wildlife-dependent activities such as photography, hiking, wildlife observation, picnicking, educational tours and events, and general fishing access. Visitors engaged in these activities have historically co-existed without conflicts. Of the estimated that 5 to 10 people that visit DDE NFH each summer day, 1 to 2 are recreational anglers.

#### ***No Action***

For the purposes of analysis, the No Action Alternative considers DDE NFH closed to recreational fishing access and other listed forms of recreation. There would be a loss of approximately 2,500 annual visitations and 100 angler-use days as a result of the No Action Alternative that would prevent recreational fishing in Furnace Brook and other listed forms of recreation on hatchery property. This may negatively impact hatchery visitation and result in a lost opportunity to promote the Service's work to the angling community and recreational users. While the loss of public access to Furnace Brook negatively affect anglers that want to fish the waterway, it is anticipated that those anglers would substitute other nearby fishing opportunities.

#### ***Proposed Action***

The Proposed Action Alternative considers DDE NFH officially opened for recreational fishing access and other listed forms of recreation. This alternative would provide the hatchery with 2,500 recreational-use visitors and 100 angler-use days per year. These actions should not impact each other because anglers currently use the public-use areas without conflict because there is little spatial overlap among the recreational activities with angling. The Service plans to continually monitor for conflicts and evaluate mitigation measures that may be necessary to solve or to minimize conflicts between users should the need arise.

### **Cultural Resources**

Although DDE NFH was constructed in 1909, there are very few extant features relating from the early history of the hatchery aside from the dam (ca. 1909) and the spring house (ca. 1909). With the exception of the display pool (1965), most of the hatchery complex was built during reconstruction from 1956 until 1959, including a hatchery building (1958), two residences (ca. late 1950s), and twenty raceways (1958). In 2016, DDE NFH was evaluated for its eligibility to be listed on the State and National Register for Historic Places (Sagerman 2016). The evaluation determined that DDE NFH appears to be eligible for both, stating that the hatchery has

contributed “to the history of fish culture in Vermont,” has “intact historic buildings, structures, and setting,” and “is the only remaining Federal fish hatchery in Vermont that is over fifty years of age” (Sagerman 2016).

Under both alternatives, there will be no construction of facilities, ground disturbing actions, or modifications of structures over 50 years of age. There are no known Indian Trust Resources on this hatchery and this action will not impact any Indian Trust Resources. Thus, the Proposed Action Alternative, that considers DDE NFH officially opened for recreational fishing and other listed forms of recreation, would not impact any cultural, historical, or Tribal resources nor would the No Action Alternative.

## **Land Use and Administration**

### ***No Action***

For the purposes of analysis, the No Action Alternative considers DDE NFH closed to recreational fishing access and other listed forms of recreation. Therefore, there would be no impact from recreational fishing or other human activity to use of hatchery facilities (roads, public-use areas, parking lots) because they would be closed to the public. There would also be fewer administrative and maintenance responsibilities as a result of fewer visitors.

### ***Proposed Action***

The Proposed Action Alternative considers DDE NFH officially opened for recreational fishing access and other listed forms of recreation. Therefore, an increase in the use of hatchery roads, public-use areas, and parking lots may occur. The hatchery maintains public use and access areas for fishing and other recreational activities including a single, unpaved visitor-parking space adjacent to the bridge on Holden Road in the northern section of the property, and during opening hours a visitor parking lot through the gated and paved hatchery entrance road in the southern section of the property (Figure 1). Given that the hatchery is closed and gated at night, it is in the best interest of DDE NFH to limit other listed forms of recreation that occur on public-use areas beyond the gated area to opening hours of the hatchery. No negative impacts are expected to land use because these public-use areas including existing access points, parking lots, and roads to access Furnace Brook are well established.

## **Socioeconomics**

According to data provided by the U.S. Census, the population in Rutland County, Vermont, has been declining with an estimated 58,672 residences in 2018 and a negative growth rate of approximately -4.8 percent since 2010. The population of Vermont has slightly increased with a positive growth rate of 0.1 percent over the same period. According to the 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, approximately 207,000 residents and non-residents fished in Vermont. All fishing-related expenditures in Vermont totaled \$131 million in 2011. Additionally, approximately 370,000 residents and non-residents participated in wildlife-watching, including wildlife observation and photography, in Vermont in 2011. All wildlife-watching expenditures in Vermont totaled \$289 million in 2011.

Neither alternatives are expected to have negative impacts on socioeconomics because it is anticipated that anglers would substitute other nearby fishing and recreational opportunities.

### **Environmental Justice**

Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, requires all Federal agencies to incorporate environmental justice into their missions by identifying and addressing disproportionately high or adverse human health or environmental effects of their programs and policies on minorities and low-income populations and communities.

The Service has not identified any potential high and adverse environmental or human health impacts from these proposed actions or any of the alternatives. The Service has identified no minority or low-income communities within the impact area. Minority or low income communities will not be disproportionately affected by any impacts from these proposed actions or any of the alternatives.

### **Indian Trust Resources**

There are no known Indian Trust Resources on DDE NFH property and this action will not impact any Indian Trust Resources.

### **Cumulative Impact Analysis**

Cumulative impacts are defined as “the impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions” (40 CFR 1508.7).

### **Fishing**

Fishing and other listed forms of recreation have been allowed on Furnace Brook and on DDE NFH property for many years. Under the proposed actions, there are no anticipated impacts to the fisheries on the waterway because fishing is conducted in accordance with State regulations to ensure sustainable fish populations and reduce adverse impacts. Furthermore, the other listed forms of recreation are not anticipated to affect fisheries since they currently occur on land and have minimal contact and interference with fish populations with no significant adverse effects on aquatic species.

A valid fishing license from the State of Vermont is required to fish Furnace Brook from the hatchery property (VTFWD, 2019). No Federal permit or other compliance is necessary. The current proposed alternative would allow public access to recreational fishing in accordance with all State of Vermont recreational fishing regulations. The current proposed alternative would also allow other listed forms of recreation during opening hours of the hatchery. In contrast, adopting the No Action Alternative would reduce angling and other recreational uses on hatchery property by closing public access and thus reducing opportunities for anglers and other recreational users.

### **Other Wildlife-Dependent Recreation**

Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the use of the public-use areas might negatively affect individual wildlife species that are disturbance-sensitive, such as certain migratory birds during the nesting season, reptiles, and amphibians. Such impacts would be minimal, and are not expected to increase from current use. It is unlikely that continuing public use will affect the population viability of such species, including threatened, endangered, and special status species.

### **Land Use**

There are no new or additional anticipated effects to land use as a result of the Proposed Action Alternative given that public-use areas are established and the area has been developed since 1909 and redeveloped in the late 1950s. There are no new or additional anticipated effects to soil, vegetation, or land use ownership from the proposed actions since the access area has been in use.

### **Mitigation Measures and Conditions**

Recreational fishing and other listed forms of recreation currently occur on DDE NFH property. Thus, the Proposed Action Alternative represents the status quo and does not present unknown or unique environmental risks. The Proposed Action Alternative is not expected to have any adverse effects on ecologically critical areas, historic, cultural, or archeological resources, air quality, fisheries resources, public health and safety, or water quality, including drinking water. No land use changes are expected. No hazardous wastes will be generated, transported, stored, or disposed of as a result of the implementation to any of the alternatives.

A valid fishing license from the State of Vermont is required to fish on Furnace Brook from the hatchery property (VTFWD, 2019). No Federal permit or other compliance is necessary to fish on Furnace Brook. Other recreational users may participate in photography, hiking, wildlife observation, and picnicking on the public-use areas on hatchery property.

### **Monitoring**

Monitoring of the fish populations on Furnace Brook will continue to be the responsibility of VTFWD. The hatchery staff plans to evaluate public access and use on an annual basis and modify, as needed, to protect fish, wildlife, their habitats, and hatchery infrastructure. The hatchery staff also plans to monitor for impacts related to fishing (e.g., garbage thrown in the public-use areas, along the shoreline, access related erosion, damage to restored vegetation, etc.) to these areas and may close properties or impose restrictions if needed. Alternatively, DDE NFH can engage with the local community to help with needed clean-ups and any ongoing repairs to shoreline and vegetation that might become necessary. The VTFWD is interested in increasing public fishing opportunities by maximizing public access throughout the State.

The Service plans to continually monitor for conflicts and evaluate mitigation measures that may be necessary to solve or to minimize conflicts between users. DDE NFH currently experiences approximately 2,500 visitors per year for wildlife-dependent activities such as photography,

hiking, wildlife observation, picnicking, educational tours, and general fishing access. Visitors engaged in these activities have historically co-existed without conflicts. We anticipate that this will not change as a result of these proposed administrative actions.

### **Compatibility Determination**

Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the Service's ability to reach its fish and wildlife population goals would not be negatively affected. Fishing activities proposed in the DDE NFH Recreational Fishing Plan and other listed forms of recreation are compatible with the purpose of the hatchery. Recreational fishing access, as outlined in the plan, and other listed forms of recreation are "not detrimental to the propagation and distribution of fish or other aquatic animal life" (50 CFR 71) at DDE NFH.

### **Summary of Analysis**

This EA provides evidence and analysis for determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The term "significantly" as used in NEPA requires consideration of both the context of the action and the intensity of effects.

#### **No Action Alternative (Station Closed to Recreational Fishing and Other Recreation)**

Under this alternative, DDE NFH would close public access to recreational fishing and other listed forms of recreation. Disadvantages of the No Action Alternative include not being able to promote priority public uses of the National Fish Hatchery System and the inability to meet Secretarial Order 3356 that "continues the Department of the Interior's efforts to enhance conservation stewardship; increase outdoor recreation opportunities for all Americans, including opportunities to hunt and fish; and improve the management of game species and their habitats for this generation and beyond." There is no cost associated with this alternative. There would be no impact to the environment.

#### **Proposed Action Alternative (Station Open to Recreational Fishing and Other Recreation)**

The Service believes that allowing the other listed forms of recreation and maintaining public access to recreational fishing on DDE NFH property in accordance with the State of Vermont's fishing regulations does not have any significant impacts on habitat, wildlife, or the human environment. Opening the hatchery to fishing access and other listed forms of recreation would promote Secretarial Order 3356 that "continues the Department of the Interior's efforts to enhance conservation stewardship; increase outdoor recreation opportunities for all Americans, including opportunities to hunt and fish; and improve the management of game species and their habitats for this generation and beyond."

The proposed actions do not establish a precedent for future actions that have significant effects on resources, nor do they lead to a violation of Federal, State, or local environmental laws. The effects of the proposed actions on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial.

### **List of Preparers**

Henry Bouchard, Project Leader, Dwight D. Eisenhower National Fish Hatchery  
Dan Wong, Fish Biologist, Dwight D. Eisenhower National Fish Hatchery  
Andrew Milliken, Complex Manager, Vermont-Massachusetts Complex

### **State Coordination**

The Service reviewed applicable State fishing laws and has contacted the VTFWD about DDE NFH's Recreational Fishing Plan. The VTFWD is supportive of the Recreational Fishing Plan and supports public access to Furnace Brook as well as other listed forms of recreation

### **Tribal Consultation**

The Service will be contacting the Stockbridge-Munsee Community Band of the Mohican Nation, that has had an historic presence in the State of Vermont, regarding the DDE NFH Recreational Fishing Plan.

### **Public Outreach**

This EA and the DDE NFH Recreational Fishing Plan will be provided to the public for a 30-day comment period. We will inform the public through local venues and on the hatchery's official website. Comments received from the public will be considered, and modifications may be incorporated into the final plan and decision documents.

### **List of Sources, Agencies, and Persons Consulted**

Louis Porter - Commissioner, VTFWD  
Eric Palmer – Fish Division Director  
Eliese Dykstra - Fish and Wildlife Biologist, New England Ecological Services Field Office (Endangered Species Act Section 7 Consultation)  
Amy Wood - Regional Historic Preservation Officer, North Atlantic-Appalachian Regional Office (National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 Consultation)

**Determination**

*This section will be filled out upon completion of any public comment period and at the time of finalization of the Environmental Assessment.*

- The Service’s action will not result in a significant impact on the quality of the human environment. See the attached “**Finding of No Significant Impact**”.
- The Service’s action **may significantly affect** the quality of the human environment and the Service will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

Preparer Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name/Title/Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

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Reviewer Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name/Title: \_\_\_\_\_

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- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. (2015). *Strategic Plan for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program: FY2016-2020*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior. Retrieved from [https://www.fws.gov/fisheries/pdf\\_files/FAC\\_StrategyPlan\\_2016-2020.pdf](https://www.fws.gov/fisheries/pdf_files/FAC_StrategyPlan_2016-2020.pdf).

## OTHER APPLICABLE STATUTES, EXECUTIVE ORDERS & REGULATIONS

### *Cultural Resources*

- American Indian Religious Freedom Act, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 1996 – 1996a; 43 CFR Part 7
- Antiquities Act of 1906, 16 U.S.C. 431-433; 43 CFR Part 3
- Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, 16 U.S.C. 470aa – 470mm; 18 CFR Part 1312; 32 CFR Part 229; 36 CFR Part 296; 43 CFR Part 7
- National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 470-470x-6; 36 CFR Parts 60, 63, 78, 79, 800, 801, and 810
- Paleontological Resources Protection Act, 16 U.S.C. 470aaa – 470aaa-11
- Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, 25 U.S.C. 3001-3013; 43 CFR Part 10
- Executive Order 11593 – Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment, 36 Fed. Reg. 8921 (1971)
- Executive Order 13007 – Indian Sacred Sites, 61 Fed. Reg. 26771 (1996)

### *Fish and Wildlife*

- Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 668-668c, 50 CFR 22
- Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 1531-1544; 36 CFR Part 13; 50 CFR Parts 10, 17, 23, 81, 217, 222, 225, 402, and 450
- Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956, 16 U.S.C. 742 a-m
- Lacey Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 3371 et seq.; 15 CFR Parts 10, 11, 12, 14, 300, and 904
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 703-712; 50 CFR Parts 10, 12, 20, and 21
- Executive Order 13186 – Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds, 66 Fed. Reg. 3853 (2001)

### *Natural Resources*

- Clean Air Act, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 7401-7671q; 40 CFR Parts 23, 50, 51, 52, 58, 60, 61, 82, and 93; 48 CFR Part 23
- Wilderness Act, 16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.
- Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, 16 U.S.C. 1271 et seq.
- Executive Order 13112 – Invasive Species, 64 Fed. Reg. 6183 (1999)

### *Water Resources*

- Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, 16 U.S.C. 1451 et seq.; 15 CFR Parts 923, 930, 933
- Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972 (commonly referred to as Clean Water Act), 33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq.; 33 CFR Parts 320-330; 40 CFR Parts 110, 112, 116, 117, 230-232, 323, and 328
- Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899, as amended, 33 U.S.C. 401 et seq.; 33 CFR Parts 114, 115, 116, 321, 322, and 333

- Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974, 42 U.S.C. 300f et seq.; 40 CFR Parts 141-148
- Executive Order 11988 – Floodplain Management, 42 Fed. Reg. 26951 (1977)
- Executive Order 11990 – Protection of Wetlands, 42 Fed. Reg. 26961 (1977)