



Coleman National Fish Hatchery Self-Guided Tour

1. **Hatchery Building:** This building houses all of the egg hatching trays (egg stacks) and tanks for newly hatched fish. Water flows into the egg stacks at the top, through each tray and then out of the bottom. Approximately five weeks after fertilization the egg hatches into a yolk-sac fry. This yolk-sac is the sole source of food for these juvenile fish, and the fish remain in the stacks until the yolk-sac has been absorbed (approximately 5-6 more weeks). Ideal temperature for the eggs and young fish is 54°F. After the yolk-sac is absorbed young salmon fry are placed outside in the raceways (see #2) and young steelhead fry are placed in the green tanks, in the middle of this building, where they remain until mid-June when they are put into outside raceways.
2. **Rearing Ponds (Raceways):** Juvenile salmon and steelhead are placed in these ponds from the hatchery building (see #1). They are fed a diet rich in protein, primarily made-up of fish meal with supplemental vitamins and minerals. The tent-like structures you see over the raceways help provide shade for the small fish as they grow. The larger raceways are used most frequently, but you will see some juvenile fish in the smaller, rear, raceways from February through June. Feel free to look in the ponds, but please stay off of the metal walkways between the raceways.
3. **Spawning Building and Visitor Viewing Area:** During the spawning season (October through February) you will see spawning activities (contact the office for information on specific spawning days). The adult fish, typically 2-4 years old, are anesthetized with carbon dioxide and checked for ripeness on the sorting table. The ripe salmon are killed and sorted into males and females for spawning. The “green”, or unripe, fish are sent back out to a holding pond (see #4) for spawning at a future date. From the spawning table fish are spawned, eggs are put into a bucket, rinsed with fresh water and then transported to the hatchery building (see #1) where they are raised until they are put into the outside raceways (see #2).
4. **Holding Pond:** Fish enter this pond, via the fish ladder, from Battle Creek. In this pond you will see both salmon and steelhead which will be sorted once they enter the hatchery. You may also see fish with white fuzzy spots on their back and head. This is a result of a common water-borne fungus that invades wounds on the skin of the fish. See if you can find both male and female Chinook in the pond-males tend to be narrower and have a hook-like upper jaw while females tend to be fatter with a smaller head.
5. **Fish Ladder and Viewing Platform:** Follow the arrows on the map to the viewing platform located along the banks of Battle Creek. Along the way, you will pass over a few of the many cells of the fish ladder that allows fish in the creek to enter the hatchery. The entrance to the fish ladder is located on the upstream side of the viewing platform. You may see fish attempting to jump over the barrier weir that spans the width of Battle Creek; that weir is designed to prevent fish from passing upstream and instead encourage those fish enter the hatchery. The fish ladder is a long series of cells that winds around from the creek into the hatchery holding pond (see #4). The fish ladder has many baffles and deep pools that allow fish to rest as they move upstream in the ladder.
6. **Battle Creek:** Battle Creek originates near Lassen Peak and is fed by snow melt and a series of natural springs. The Creek flows down through the foothills and into the Sacramento River near Cottonwood, CA. Salmon and steelhead come into the creek from the Sacramento River which is located about 5.8 miles downstream of the hatchery. By the time the fish reach the hatchery they have swam at least 277 miles to get here (271 in the river and almost 6 in the creek)-that’s an exhausting journey!
7. **Water Treatment Plant:** Water entering the hatchery comes from Battle Creek and contains bacteria, viruses and parasites that can be harmful to fish. Before the water is used for fish culture it is filtered and treated with ozone to kill all the disease organisms. This building does not have public access at this time.

We hope you enjoy your visit to Coleman National Fish Hatchery. Feel free to ask any uniformed employees any questions you may have.

See Map on Reverse Side