

# Hurricane Recovery Stocking

*Hatcheries help restore fisheries and lives*

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## **Fisheries Lost**

Hurricanes have had a devastating impact on coastal and inland fisheries in recent years. Much of the inland fishery losses are caused by oxygen depletions that occur when large volumes of organic matter enter rivers and streams during periods of heavy rains and flooding. The decomposing matter dramatically lowers dissolved oxygen levels that are necessary for the survival of aquatic species. Coastal waters suffering from salt water intrusion experience this same problem and can be compounded by a more delayed effect. Many of the aquatic freshwater plant species found along the coastal areas die from this influx of salt water. The decomposition of these plants and the subsequent oxygen depletion can last over a longer period of time.



*Above: coastal wetland at Bayou Sauvage flooded after Hurricane Katrina; below: massive inland fish kill caused by Rita*

## **The Role of National Fish Hatcheries**

National Fish Hatcheries have provided--and will continue to provide--technical support and fish for stocking waters that have suffered losses due to the devastating effects of hurricanes. The immediate restoration of these areas is of high priority. The void created by the loss of important recreational species in affected areas could result in an overpopulation of undesirable species. In order to offset this possibility, several stockings have already taken place in areas where recreational fish species loss has been most significant. USFWS hatchery personnel assist in these efforts by rearing, stocking and transporting fish along with partner State Natural Resource Agencies. USFWS is also assisting partner agencies with evaluation and monitoring of system recovery and the effects of fish stocking.

## **Restored Fisheries Restore Lives**

The rivers, lakes and streams that have been impacted by recent hurricane events are critical to the many residents that inhabit these often remote areas. This valuable resource provides food, income and a way of life that many of these people have depended on for years. From a recreational standpoint these waters provide a quality of life experience that is irreplaceable. Economic stimulus provided by this resource is created through both recreational and commercial activities. In the hard-hit states of Mississippi, Louisiana and North Carolina, for instance, the combined economic benefit of recreational fish stocking by National Fish Hatcheries amounts to more than \$7.9 million annually. That includes 85 jobs, \$4 million in retail sales, and more than \$600,000 in taxes generated for local, State and Federal governments.

(continued from front)



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### **Fishery Recovery Efforts to Date**

Federal hatcheries in the Southeast have produced more than 2.8 million fish destined for waters impacted by recent hurricane events. These hatcheries have worked closely with partners in hurricane recovery efforts that have included:

- **Edenton NFH** (NC) stocked 1,785 bluegill and 4,500 largemouth bass to state and county recreation areas in North Carolina, and 14,400 largemouth bass into the Roanoke River in response to fishery losses as a result of Hurricanes Isabel and Floyd
- **Orangeburg NFH** (SC) transported 85,000 largemouth bass reared at **Welaka NFH** (FL) to North Carolina, and also raised and distributed 500,000 bluegill sunfish in North Carolina waters to assist in recovery efforts after Hurricane Ivan

- **Natchitoches NFH** (LA) produced 586,122 largemouth bass, 618,120 bluegill, 45,279 redear sunfish, and 134,462 channel catfish to help mitigate the effects of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita
- **Private John Allen NFH** (MS) stocked 10,000 channel catfish, 90,000 bluegill sunfish, and 60,000 redear sunfish in response to fish losses that occurred during flooding associated with Hurricane Rita. The hatchery also stocked 5,886 advanced channel catfish, 520,150 redear sunfish, and 191,832 bluegill bream in response to fishery losses as a result of Hurricane Katrina. The hatchery plans to produce largemouth bass to supplement stockings of Pascagoula River, and assist with recovering paddlefish, striped bass and other imperiled species

### **Future Efforts**

Service hatcheries are continuing to work closely with partners in hurricane recovery fish production, planning and monitoring as restoration efforts move forward and evaluations are completed.

### **For more information, contact:**

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