NEWS
from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

October 28, 1996 Janet Tennyson 202-208-5634

REPORT DESCRIBES VITAL ROLE OF NATIONAL FISH HATCHERY SYSTEM IN FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

If you're wondering where most of the Nation's fish come from, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's annual report on the National Fish Hatchery System can provide you with some answers.

Each year, the Interior Department agency releases the *Fish and Fish Egg Distribution Report*, a treasure trove of statistics and other information on hatchery operations nationwide and how they fit into the agency's role in fisheries management.

The Service produces, transports, and stocks hundreds of millions of fish and fish eggs of more than 60 different species annually to states and Native American Tribes, bolstering fishery populations as well as fishing opportunities nationwide.

The present stressed state of the Nation's fisheries and aquatic systems gives such information on hatchery operations new relevancy. Pollution, poor water quality, and destruction of habitat put extreme strains on fisheries to the point that many are not considered sustainable.

"National fish hatcheries are one of fisheries managers' most effective tools for restoring depleted fish stocks," said John Rogers, acting Service director. "And those of us who enjoy sportfishing have come to appreciate the critical role they play in providing millions of Americans great fishing opportunities."

The National Fish Hatchery System currently includes 72 national fish hatcheries, 9 fish health centers, and 5 fish technology centers. In 1995, these facilities distributed some 170 million fish and 140 million fish eggs.

According to the report, 33 of the Service's hatcheries are considered "mitigation hatcheries," charged with compensating for Federal water project impacts by enhancing fisheries in reservoirs and tailwaters the projects created.

Last year, mitigation hatcheries distributed more than 98 million fish, including salmon, northern pike, walleye, and rainbow trout, to areas such as the North Fork, Little Red, Missouri, Sacramento, Columbia, Snake, and White rivers and Tennessee Valley Authority reservoirs.

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The report also notes that 41 species listed under the Endangered Species Act or candidates for the Act's protection are held at 35 Service hatcheries. Propagation at 29 hatcheries and 4 fish technology centers supplements depleted stocks and helps the Service meet its responsibilities to recover listed species.

These efforts focus on the endangered fishes of the Colorado River Basin (Colorado squawfish, razorback sucker, bonytail chub), Apache trout, winter chinook salmon, and Virgin River chub.

Other fisheries conservation efforts in which national fish hatcheries play a significant role include:

- Restoration of **Atlantic salmon** in New England, a cooperative effort with the states and the Commerce Department's National Marine Fisheries Service. During the past 6 years, national fish hatcheries have provided more than 35 million Atlantic salmon for stocking in New England waters, including the Penobscot, Connecticut, Merrimack, and Pawcatuck rivers. The Service also helps restore salmon habitat, regulate harvest, and provide fish passage facilities.

- Rebuilding **lake trout** in the Great Lakes. This program combines an aggressive stocking program with efforts to control the sea lamprey, an exotic species that preys on lake trout; improving water quality; and regulating harvest. During the past 11 years, national fish hatcheries have stocked more than 85 million lake trout eggs, fry, and juveniles into the Great Lakes. Notable progress has been made especially in Lake Superior, Lake Huron, and Lake Erie, where the lake trout has been showing signs of better reproductive success. Many areas of Lake Superior will no longer require stocking of hatchery fish.

- Restoration of **Pacific salmon and steelhead trout** in the Northwest. These efforts consist of a combination of hatchery propagation, wild stock management, and habitat restoration. Efforts in the Columbia River Basin include management of three stocks of Snake River salmon listed under the Endangered Species Act and efforts to prevent the need for future listings of other imperiled stocks. Last year alone, the Service produced 8 million spring chinook salmon, 42 million fall chinook, 5 million coho salmon, 5 million chum salmon, and 6 million steelhead trout for the Columbia River Basin and western Washington.

- **Striped bass** restoration along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, a cooperative effort with several states and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. In 1995 alone, the

Service stocked 10 million striped bass along these coasts. After reaching record lows in the early 1980s, striped bass have made a remarkable comeback, especially in the Chesapeake Bay. Along with stocking, tagging and monitoring programs and harvest regulation have contributed to the striped bass success story.

The *Fish and Fish Egg Distribution Report* also includes a breakdown of how many fish were distributed for each fishery program. The Pacific salmon and steelhead program tops the list, receiving nearly 68 million fish, while more than 54 million fish were distributed under other inland restoration or mitigation programs. More than 7 million fish were distributed under the Atlantic salmon restoration program and more than 400,000 for efforts to recover endangered species (not including those covered under other programs). Native American Tribes received nearly 7 million fish while more than 6 million were distributed on Service lands, namely national wildlife refuges offering fishing opportunities.

The report further describes the Service's role in providing leadership and guidance to state hatcheries, the commercial aquaculture industry, and other organizations that raise fish. The Service's unique expertise related to fish culture includes fish propagation technology, fish health, broodstock management, drug and chemical management, stock assessment, and aquaculture.

Other efforts include controlling fish diseases, in part by conducting fish health monitoring to learn about interactions between hatchery and wild fish. Service fishery facilities are working with "cryopreservation," a technique to preserve genetic material of imperiled fish and also evaluate fish performance under different management conditions.

Copies of the 1995 *Fish and Fish Egg Distribution Report* are available from the Service's Division of Fish Hatcheries, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, MS 833, Arlington, Virginia, 22203; telephone 703-358-1715.

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FACTS
from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

National Fish Hatchery Facts

Which species of fish were produced the most by national fish hatcheries in 1995?

Fall chinook salmon top the list with nearly 43 million produced. National fish hatcheries also produced 32 million walleye, 12 million rainbow trout, 10 million striped bass, and 9 million Atlantic salmon.

Which states received the most fish from national fish hatcheries in 1995?

Washington (42 million), California (18 million), Wisconsin (12 million), South Dakota (10 million), and North Dakota (8 million).

Which states received the most fish eggs from national fish hatcheries in 1995?

Illinois (24 million), Washington (11 million), Wisconsin (10 million), Colorado (9 million), and Oklahoma (9 million).

Which national fish hatchery distributed the largest number of fish in 1995?

Gavins Point National Fish Hatchery in South Dakota distributed more than 20 million fish in 1995. Coleman National Fish Hatchery in California is a close second, distributing 18 million fish. Spring Creek National Fish Hatchery in Washington distributed 16 million.

Which national fish hatchery distributed the largest number of fish eggs in 1995?

Genoa National Fish Hatchery in Wisconsin distributed nearly 26 million fish eggs in 1995, while Ennis National Fish Hatchery in Montana distributed 19 million and Erwin National Fish Hatchery in Tennessee distributed nearly 14 million.

Which national fish hatchery distributed the most pounds of fish in 1995?

Dworshak National Fish Hatchery in Idaho, which distributed nearly 440,000 pounds of steelhead trout, chinook salmon, and rainbow trout.

What were the larger fish species produced at national fish hatcheries in 1995?

The larger species produced at national fish hatcheries include the paddlefish, which can weigh between 50 and 100 pounds, and several species of sturgeon, which reach more than 7 feet in length and weigh more than 1,200 pounds when fully grown.

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What were the smaller fish species produced at national fish hatcheries in 1995?

Among the smaller species produced at national fish hatcheries were the bluegill and green sunfish, which grow to an average of 1/3 pound.

Which state has the most national fish hatcheries?

Washington State, with 11 national fish hatcheries.

Which is the oldest national fish hatchery?

Neosho National Fish Hatchery in Missouri, established in 1888. Other premier national fish hatcheries include Spring Creek National Fish Hatchery in Washington and Leadville National Fish Hatchery in Colorado.

Another one of the Fish and Wildlife Service's oldest hatcheries, D.C. Booth National Historic Fish Hatchery in Spearfish, South Dakota, serves as the agency's collection site for historic fishery information. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, hatchery operations began at the site in 1896. Today, D.C. Booth includes a museum; an artifacts and records center; a fish viewing area; garages, raceways, and ponds; and the original drainage channels built of cut stone.

How many people visit national fish hatcheries each year?

An average of 3 million. Many national fish hatcheries offer environmental education programs, outdoor classrooms, and free fishing days, especially during National Fishing Week, held the first week in June of each year.

Why are national fish hatcheries important?

National fish hatcheries serve as a critical fishery management option in reversing the declines of the Nation's fishery resources. Human influences have pushed many fisheries beyond the ability of nature to sustain them. National fish hatcheries make a significant contribution toward restoration of these declining fisheries and in meeting the needs of 50 million Americans who enjoy the sport of fishing.

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