



News Release

Public Affairs Office
PO Box 1306
Albuquerque, NM 87103
505/248-6911
505/248-6915 (Fax)

Southwest Region (Arizona • New Mexico • Oklahoma • Texas) www.fws.gov/southwest/

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Contact: Nicole Haskett Osborn at: (505) 248-6599

Update: Massive Fish Die Off at Willow Beach National Fish Hatchery

On Thursday, November 21, the elevation in Lake Mohave was low enough to starve the rainbow trout production water pumps at Willow Beach National Fish Hatchery (NFH). The loss of water flow affected six raceways causing no water to be able to flow through to fish. Three of the six raceways under production were loaded light enough that they did not have any fish losses at the time the issue was noted. Staff were able to pull screens to release live fish from these raceways, where they were then drained into Lake Mohave, saving 11,105 fish weighting a total of 7,782 pounds.

Unfortunately, the three other raceways were lost and no fish survived. The total loss for those raceways was 20,880 fish, weighing a total of 13,420 pounds.

The Willow Beach NFH uses water from the Colorado River to raise rainbow trout for state recreational angling programs. Fluctuations in the flow of the river affect how much water is available to the hatchery's intake pipeline.

Problems with the pumps had occurred once before this year on August 12, when sometime during the night the pipeline at Willow Beach NFH that delivers water to raceways became clogged with sediment and vegetation killing thousands of pounds of rainbow trout. The blockage was not discovered until early Tuesday morning when hatchery staff went to the raceways to feed the trout. All of the 40,000 trout that were lost were large, stockable sized fish, weighing a total of 25,000 lbs. at last count. The hatchery is operating with only one intake pipeline due to the structural failure of the second pipeline.

As with the first die off, this massive and unexpected loss of fish will have a serious impact on rainbow trout stocking into the Colorado River.

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