



# News Release

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## Massive Fish Die Off at Willow Beach National Fish Hatchery

Sometime during the night of Monday August 12, the pipeline at Willow Beach National Fish Hatchery 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.

Hatchery manager Mark Olson and his staff immediately began working to clear the pipeline, finally freeing a massive clump of vegetation by turning the pumps on and off in order to work the blockage through the system. The hatchery is currently operating with only one intake pipeline due to the recent structural failure of the second pipeline. The vegetation load varies seasonally, and although this is the first time the hatchery has experienced a full water blockage of this kind, there have been partial blockages in the past and staff have been battling aquatic vegetation coming through the hatchery for many years.

After cleaning the raceways, Willow Beach National Fish Hatchery reports that the blockage in the intake water pipeline has resulted in a 40% loss of the trout raised on the hatchery. At this time, hatchery staff are using all available measures to save the remaining trout. However, as a result of this massive and unexpected die-off, there will be a serious impact on trout stocking into the Colorado River. Fishermen and anglers should be advised that smaller sized fish are already being held for October and November commitments, but stockings numbers will be much lower than normal.

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