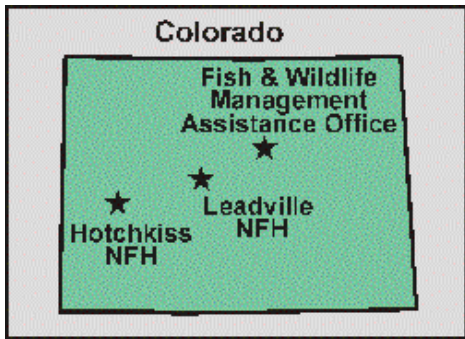




Leadville National Fish Hatchery, Colorado

Restoring America's Fisheries



"The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people."

National Fish Hatchery System: Who We Are

The National Fish Hatchery System (NFHS) is comprised of 70 Fish Hatcheries, 7 Fish Technology Centers, and 9 Fish Health Centers nationwide. The NFHS operated by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has a unique responsibility in helping restore native aquatic populations, mitigate for fisheries lost as a result of federal water projects, provide fish to benefit Tribes and the National Wildlife Refuges, and to recover species listed under the Endangered Species Act. The NFHS works closely with other programs in the Service and with the States, Tribes, and the private sector to complement habitat restoration and other resource management strategies for maintaining healthy ecosystems that support healthy fisheries.

Leadville National Fish Hatchery

Leadville NFH, established in 1889, is the second oldest Federally operated fish hatchery in existence today. Located on 3,072 acres near the city of Leadville, the hatchery's subalpine forest surroundings with its cold, clean water supply and nearby source of native cutthroat trout populations provide the ideal spot for trout production.

Originally, the hatchery produced trout that were distributed over the entire Rocky Mountain region. Waters which originally held only native cutthroat trout, or none at all, were stocked with additional trout. The Black Hills area and parts of Wyoming that held no native trout at all also were first stocked from this hatchery.

In recent years, Leadville NFH has provided between 125,000 and 200,000 fish annually to support fishing in the Fryingpan-Arkansas drainage and throughout Colorado. Leadville's efforts also support recovery of the four endangered fishes in the Colorado River. However, following the discovery of whirling disease (WD) at the hatchery in 1995, Leadville fish are now stocked in lower elevation waters where they can contribute to recreational fishing and not contribute to the further spread of WD in more pristine, higher altitude native trout habitat.

Since the hatchery took 2 of its lakes out of production, the level of whirling disease contamination has dramatically gone down at Leadville NFH.

The USFWS recently completed an Environmental Assessment on operations at Leadville NFH, and is currently developing plans to clean-up the hatchery. After clean-up, only clean (WD negative) fish will be produced. At that point, Leadville will once again stock Fryingpan-Arkansas waters.

The only trout that Leadville NFH is currently rearing is the Snake River cutthroat trout.

To meet the trout production demands, Leadville NFH facilities include 2 ponds, 16 raceways, and 20 nursery tanks. There are also 2 ponds open for public fishing.

In fiscal year 2000, Leadville NFH produced over 200 thousand trout and stocked over 20 different water areas.

Over 55,000 angler days of recreational fishing in Colorado valued at over \$2,740,000 are a result of the stocking efforts!



*Historic Leadville Hatchery Building;
USFWS*



Leadville NFH Raceway; USFWS

How Does the Hatchery Help?

Leadville NFH helps in many ways! Currently, the hatchery produces trout to fill needs throughout Colorado. These fish help to replenish and encourage sustainable trout populations and provide angling opportunities for recreational users like you!

As the natural aquatic habitat changes from *natural* (drought, flood, habitat destruction) or *human* (over-harvest, pollution, habitat loss due to development and dam construction) influences, the natural production of fish declines. Stocking of fish is one of the many management strategies used by biologists to help replenish the populations for years to come.

Public Use Opportunities

Leadville NFH provides many exciting visitor opportunities, as well as gives back to the local communities.

Open to the public, Leadville NFH welcomes visitors to the hatchery for a closeup view of the fish production process. With over 36,000 visitors

annually, the dedicated volunteer hosts at the Visitor Center bring the hatchery experience alive with educational hatchery tours.

In addition to the hatchery experience, visitors also have a bounty of nearby recreational opportunities to explore:

- Fish viewing and feeding
- Hiking/nature trails
- Fishing ponds
- Greenback cutthroat trout fishery
- Picnic/playground area
- Wildlife and birdwatching
- Photography
- Wilderness access
- Mountain biking
- Cross country skiing
- Ice fishing
- Snowshoeing

Try your luck fishing on the 2 public fishing ponds at the hatchery site, or test your wildlife knowledge while hiking the surrounding subalpine forests with its breathtaking views in the Mt. Massive Wilderness Area.

Be sure to bring your binoculars for the spectacular wildlife viewing, such as mountain blue birds, juncos, great blue herons, hawks, eagles, waterfowl, elk, deer, raccoons, porcupines, and fox.

Educational programs/tours are provided for the public and school groups during business hours. The hatchery also participates in local public fishing festivities, such as the Annual Children's Fishing Day, and supports local community activities, such as the Leadville-100 bike and run race.

Partnerships with the local Lake County and Colorado Outward Bound School continue to help provide many recreational opportunities for visitors.

Leadville NFH is located 6 miles southwest of the city of Leadville along Highway 300. Come prepared for a day of fun!



Annual Children's Fishing Day; USFWS