U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Dale Hollow
National Fish Hatchery

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Station Facts

- Established: 1966.
- Number of staff: eight.

Geographic Area Covered

- Stones River System, TN (mitigation) - J. Percy Priest Reservoir tailwater (TW), Stones River.
- Caney Fork River System, TN (mitigation) – Center Hill Reservoir TW
- Obey River System, TN (mitigation) – Wolf River, Dale Hollow Reservoir and TW
- Duck River System, TN (mitigation) – Normandy Reservoir TW
- Elk River System, TN (mitigation) – Tims Ford Reservoir TW
- Hiwassee River System, TN (mitigation) – Apalachia Reservoir TW, Ocoee River, Parksville Reservoir and TW
- Clinch River System, TN (mitigation) – Norris Reservoir TW
- Little Tennessee River System, TN (mitigation) – Tellico Reservoir, Tellico River
- Little Tennessee River System, TN (Tapoco Projects) – Calderwood Reservoir, Chilhowee Reservoir
- Holston River System, TN (mitigation) – Cherokee Reservoir TW, Ft. Patrick Henry Reservoir and TW, South Holston Reservoir and TW, Wilbur Reservoir TW, Watauga Reservoir and TW
- Northern Georgia (mitigation) – Federal Water Development Projects
- Sipsey River System, AL (mitigation/restoration tradeoff) – Lewis Smith Reservoir TW
- Red River System, TN (reimbursable) – Fort Campbell

Station Goals

- Provide rainbow, brown, brook, and lake trout for mitigation stocking in Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama.
- Provide rainbow trout to Alabama in return for Gulf Coast striped bass eggs and fry.
- Provide a limited number of rainbow and lake trout for non-mitigation stocking in Tennessee under a cooperative agreement with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency.
- Assist in the recovery and restoration of imperiled aquatic species by developing propagation/culture techniques and rearing animals for reintroduction into the wild.
- Assist Tribal governments in managing fisheries resources on Tribal lands.
- Work with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency to ensure a thorough, perennial hatchery product evaluation program.
- Provide quality environmental education opportunities.
- Develop and maintain partnerships with chambers of commerce, state tourism departments, and other agencies to promote regional support for recreational fishing and the fish hatchery.
- Establish and maintain a “Friends Group” to gain community and regional support for the fish hatchery.
- Establish and maintain a native warm season grass (prairie grass)/riparian buffer demonstration plot.

Fish Species and Capability

- Rainbow trout (mitigation/restoration trade-off/reimbursable) – 822,500 nine inch fish (245,522 lbs.); 750,000 three to four inch fish (12,430 lbs.).

- Brown trout (mitigation) – 144,000 six to eight inch fish (29,635 lbs.); 187,000 three to four inch fish (4,908 lbs.).
- Lake trout (mitigation/ reimbursable) – 100,000 six inch fish (5,400 lbs.).
- Brook trout (mitigation) – 75,000 seven to nine inch fish (22,388 lbs.).
- Barrens topminnow (restoration) – 1,200 two to three inch fish.
- Spotfin chub (recovery) – 675 two to three inch fish.

Public Use Opportunities

- More than 50,000 visitors yearly.
- Hatchery tours.
- Off-site presentations.
- Aquarium/visitor center.
- Paved walking and exercise road.
- Public fishing area.

Calendar of Events

March - November: Camping in adjacent Corps of Engineers campground, reservations recommended.

May: International Migratory Bird Day Celebration.

June: Twelfth Annual Kid's Fishing Rodeo - held on Tennessee's Free Fishing Day, June 6, 2009.

December: Christmas Bird Count. Year-round fishing in local waters.

Questions and Answers

What kind of fish do you raise?
Dale Hollow National Fish Hatchery (NFH) is a coldwater fish hatchery which means that we raise fish that do best in water temperatures between 40 degrees and 60 degrees Fahrenheit. The coldwater species currently in production at this facility are rainbow trout, brook trout, brown trout, and lake trout. The water being supplied to the hatchery to raise trout is too cold to raise spotfin chubs and Barrens topminnows. These species are raised in closed, indoor recirculation systems where water temperature can be controlled.

How big are the fish when they are released?
The majority of rainbow trout reared at this facility are used for programs requiring continuous stocking of nine inch fish in waters which typically experience intense fishing pressure and little natural reproduction. A nine inch fish is considered large enough for anglers to keep. Waters with few predators and ample food supply are stocked with two to five inch fingerlings. This technique is very cost effective because large numbers of fish can be stocked without having to incur high feed costs. Nature grows the fish to harvestable size.

Lake trout are stocked at a size of six inches. These fish are stocked into reservoirs having conditions conducive to good growth and survival.

Brown trout are managed by stocking tailwaters that will support small fish with three to four inch fingerlings. Waters which have proved not to generate high survivability when stocked with smaller fish, receive stockings of six to eight inch brown trout. Nature grows these fish to a harvestable size.

Barrens topminnows and spotfin chubs only grow to about four inches in length. The fish grown-out at Dale Hollow NFH average two inches in length when they are stocked into the wild.

Where do you stock the fish?
All of the brown trout and brook trout and most of the rainbow trout and lake trout reared at Dale Hollow NFH are stocked in and below U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) impoundments in Tennessee.

Fingerling rainbow trout are supplied to the state of Georgia. These fish are transferred to state and federal hatcheries where they are grown to a harvestable size and are subsequently stocked in and below Corps and TVA impoundments in Georgia.

Harvestable size rainbow trout are stocked into the tailwater of Lewis Smith Reservoir in Alabama to mitigate for federal water development projects and in return for Gulf Coast striped bass fry and eggs which are utilized by federal warmwater hatcheries in an ongoing Gulf Coast striped bass restoration effort.

Harvestable size rainbow trout are stocked into non-mitigation waters under a cooperative agreement with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency. This program provides recreational fishing opportunities at Ft. Campbell, the Veterans Administration Hospital in Murfreesboro, Calderwood Reservoir, Chilhowee Reservoir, and numerous winter, urban fishing events held throughout middle Tennessee.

Barrens topminnows are stocked into springs and spring influenced streams in south-central Tennessee (Franklin and Coffee Counties). These stocking sites are located on private land.

Spotfin chubs are stocked into the Tellico River in Monroe County, Tennessee and in Shoal Creek in Lawrence County, Tennessee.

How do you get eggs from the fish?
Trout spawning operations are not conducted at the hatchery. Fertilized eggs are received from other hatcheries by overnight mail in special egg shipping cartons and are placed into hatching jars. Once the eggs hatch, the sac fry are placed into indoor, concrete tanks. After the larval fish absorb the yolk sac and are ready to begin feeding, the fish are weaned onto a commercial trout diet.

Rainbow trout eggs are generally available from August through the first week of May. Brown trout and lake trout eggs are only available from the middle of October through the first week of January. Brook trout eggs are available from the middle of December through the end of January.

Stocking trout is not "natural" is it?
Stocking non-native species of trout is not "natural" but neither are dams. Dams perform critical functions such as flood control and hydro-electric power generation, but there is a down side to dams. Construction of a dam, regardless of its type, alters the entire river ecosystem. Dams often produce large, deep reservoirs in which the water stratifies into thermal layers during the summer. The water released downstream into the tailwater comes from a deep, cold layer. This newly created coldwater habitat does not provide conditions necessary for populations of native warmwater fish to be self-sustaining. Trout stocking is carried out in order to utilize the available coldwater habitat and to "mitigate" for the impacts that these water development projects have on the respective river ecosystems.