

Erwin

National Fish Hatchery



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Station Facts

- Established: 1894.
- Number of staff: five permanent.

Station Goals

- Produces 10 million disease-free eggs annually for Federal, state, and tribal hatcheries to support their fishery management efforts. Also provides eggs to research centers and universities.
- Assists tribal governments in managing fisheries resources on tribal lands.
- Supports projects to enhance federal fish and wildlife trust species and their habitats in the Southern Appalachian Ecosystem, in which this hatchery is located.
- Provides environmental education whenever possible.
- Develop and maintain partnerships with chambers of commerce, state tourist organizations, congressional staffs, and other non-governmental organizations in order to promote regional support for the fish hatchery.
- Maintain a good working relationship with the Unicoi Co. Heritage Museum which is located on the grounds of the fish hatchery.

Fish Species Reared

Four strains of rainbow trout up to three years of age.

Public Use Opportunities

- More than 40,000 visitors annually.
- Hatchery tours.
- Visitor center.
- Off-site presentations.
- Picnic pavilion.
- Unicoi Co. Heritage Museum.
- Wildlife viewing area.

Questions and Answers

How do you get the eggs from the fish?
Personnel from the hatchery each week during the spawning season select female rainbow trout that are ready to release their eggs. The following day, the eggs are squeezed by hand into a bowl. Water and sperm from males are added and the eggs are fertilized. The eggs are then placed into incubators.

What do you do with the eggs?
When the eggs are 2 weeks old, they are shipped to other hatcheries where they are hatched out to be reared to stocking size (approximately nine inches).

What do you do with the parent fish?
When the “broodfish” are no longer needed for eggs, they are stocked in public fishing waters in Eastern Tennessee or given to the Cherokee Indian Reservation in North Carolina for their recreational fishing program.

Where did you stock this week?
Since the hatchery has no “official” stocking program, the hatchery relies on the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency for any stocking announcements.

Do you give tours of the hatchery?
Yes, the hatchery does give guided tours to groups if arrangements are made in advance. The facilities are also open to the public for self-guided tours.