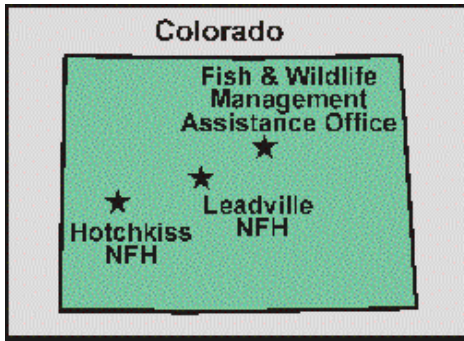




Hotchkiss National Fish Hatchery, Colorado

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.

Hotchkiss National Fish Hatchery

Hotchkiss NFH was established in 1967 as part of the Colorado River Storage Project Act. Located on 58 acres of forest surroundings on the North Fork of the Gunnison River, the hatchery's cold, clean water supply comes from the adjacent Tommy Dowell Spring.

Tommy Dowell Spring was created in the 1930's by an earthquake near Salt Lake City, whose tremors also affected the Hotchkiss area. The spring has a constant water temperature of 56°F and flows from 2,200 to 5,000 gallons per minute, providing the ideal conditions for trout production.

Currently, the hatchery is rearing rainbow trout for stocking in Colorado and New Mexico reservoirs and Federal water developments.

To meet the trout production demands, Hotchkiss NFH facilities include 24 nursery tanks, 32 concrete raceways, and 6 earthen ponds.

In fiscal year 2000, Hotchkiss NFH produced and distributed over 2 million trout and stocked over 80 different water areas in Colorado and New Mexico. Over 200,000 angler days of recreational fishing in Colorado and New Mexico valued at over \$10 million are a result of the stocking efforts!

Management Challenges

In recent years, the spread of whirling disease (WD) has become a serious management issue for hatcheries rearing trout. WD is a microscopic parasite that uses trout as part of its

life cycle. In the early stages of its life cycle, the parasite bores into a young trout's head, causing neurological problems. The trout's nervous system then becomes inhibited and the fish displays outer symptoms, such as a darkened tail and erratic swimming. Most fish with WD will have a shortened life span, resulting in reduced trout populations. There are no known health risks for humans who eat WD infected trout.

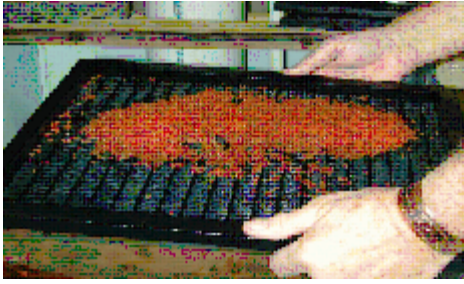
Hotchkiss NFH is one of the few public fish hatcheries in western Colorado to be certified WD-free. Due to its disease-free status, the hatchery is now assisting the Colorado Division of Wildlife by stocking disease-free trout in additional lakes, streams, and reservoirs in western Colorado. These careful management efforts sustain and promote healthy WD-free trout populations.

How Does the Hatchery Help?

Hotchkiss NFH helps in many ways. Currently, the hatchery produces trout to fill needs throughout Colorado and New Mexico. These fish help to



Overview of outside raceways; USFWS



Trout eggs on screen just before being put down into tank; USFWS

replenish and encourage sustainable trout populations and provide angling opportunities for recreational users like you.

As the aquatic habitat changes due to *natural* (drought, flood, habitat destruction) or *human* (over-harvest, pollution, habitat loss due to development and dam construction) influences, the reproduction of fish in the wild 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

Hotchkiss NFH provides many exciting visitor opportunities, and supports local communities.

Open to the public, Hotchkiss NFH welcomes visitors to the hatchery for a closeup view of the fish production process. With over 7,500 visitors annually, the dedicated staff will normally be available to answer any questions while you explore the Visitor Center and raceways. Educational programs/tours are provided for the public and school groups during business hours when scheduled in advance.

Visitors also have a bounty of nearby recreational opportunities along the North Fork of the Gunnison River:

- Hiking/nature trails
- Fishing
- Picnicking
- Wildlife and birdwatching
- Photography

Relax and enjoy your lunch under one of the five covered picnic areas on the hatchery grounds, or test your wildlife knowledge while using the Watchable Wildlife viewing area. So be sure to bring your binoculars for the wildlife viewing, such as juncos, hawks, eagles, waterfowl, elk, deer, raccoons, and fox.

The hatchery also participates in local public fishing festivities, such as the Annual Huck Finn Days Fishing Derby for Children in July. Families and friends are invited to join the hatchery staff, volunteers, and sponsors for this fun-filled fishing event.

Partnerships Make It Happen!

Hotchkiss NFH operates with support from partners, including: Colorado Division of Wildlife, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, and other Federal agencies and Service hatcheries. In addition, many local businesses, civic groups, and citizens participate and sponsor the Annual Huck Finn Days Fishing Derby. The Watchable Wildlife viewing area is partnered with the local Audubon Society and Youth Alliance Organization.

These many dedicated partners and volunteers help keep Hotchkiss NFH operating to bring recreational angling opportunities and healthy aquatic ecosystems to you, your family, and future generations.

Hotchkiss NFH is located about 3 miles south of the town of Hotchkiss and ½ mile east of Lazear, Colorado. Come prepared for a day of fun!



Hotchkiss National Fish Hatchery on the North Fork of the Gunnison River; USFWS