



# Creston National Fish Hatchery, Montana

## *Restoring America's Fisheries*



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*"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."*

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### **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.

### **Creston National Fish Hatchery**

Established in 1936, Creston NFH originally provided fingerling trout for stocking waters in Glacier National Park. Today, the hatchery has three main purposes: provide trout for fishery management activities on the seven Tribal Reservations in Montana, stock fish for mitigation purposes under the Hungry Horse Dam Mitigation Program, and produce native bull trout eggs and fry for research projects at various State, Federal, and educational facilities through the Federal Broodstock Program.

Currently, four fish species are being reared at Creston NFH:

- rainbow trout
- cutthroat trout
- kokanee salmon
- bull trout

As part of the National Broodstock Program to produce viable eggs, Creston NFH places special emphasis on the production of bull trout for native Montana fish species research. This research will help biologists to make future management decisions to help sustain bull trout populations.

In fiscal year 2000, over 1 million fish were distributed in over 60 Tribal and State water areas, and over 100,000 bull trout eggs were distributed to research facilities. To meet these high fish production demands, Creston NFH facilities support 48 fish rearing raceways fed by a 15,000 gpm spring and one well.

As a result of the Creston NFH's stocking efforts and broodstock program, annual economic benefits weigh-in at over 100,000 angler days valued at over \$5 million.

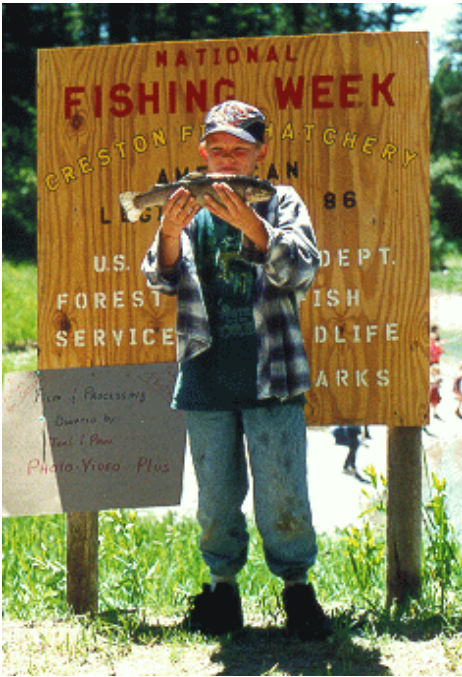
The Service is in the process of disease-proofing the water supply by capturing the springs that feed into Jessup Mill Pond and funneling the water directly to the hatchery without exposure to the surface. This measure will continue to guarantee that Creston NFH remains disease free even as whirling disease becomes established throughout the Flathead Basin in western Montana. Construction will begin in 2001 and should be completed in 2002. Hatchery production may be somewhat curtailed during this period.

### **How Does the Hatchery Help?**

Creston NFH helps in many ways. Currently, the hatchery produces trout and trout eggs to fill Tribal, State, and research needs across Montana. These fish help to replenish and encourage sustainable trout populations and provide angling opportunities for recreational users like you.



*Creston National Fish Hatchery raceways; USFWS*



*Successful day at the Creston NFH National Fishing Week fishing derby; USFWS*

Educational programs/tours are provided for the public and school groups when scheduled in advance.

When visiting the hatchery, be sure to explore additional recreational opportunities around the hatchery. Try your luck fishing on the Jessup Mill fishing pond while picnicking and enjoying the beautiful surroundings. And be sure to bring your binoculars for the wildlife and bird watching.

**Partnerships Make it Happen!**

Creston NFH operates with support from partners, including: Montana Tribes, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Glacier National Park, Bonneville Power Administration, researchers, and other Service hatcheries. In addition, the hatchery proudly partners with local schools for fishery and resource educational programs, and participates in the Hooked-On-Fishing program.

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

Creston NFH is located at the Creston Fish & Wildlife Center in Flathead County, Montana. To locate the hatchery from Kalispell, take State Highway 35 east to Creston, continue east on Highway 35 approximately one mile and turn north on Creston Hatchery Road, and then follow road for approximately one mile to the station. Come prepared for a day of fun!

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**

Open to the public, Creston NFH welcomes visitors to the hatchery for a closeup view of the fish production process. With over 8,000 visitors annually, the dedicated staff at the hatchery will normally be available to answer your questions. Visitors are invited to walk around the raceways where most of the adult trout are held, and visit the hatchery building where eggs and small fish are reared.



*Creston National Fish Hatchery employees educating school groups on aquatic education and fish biology; USFWS*