

Oetker's Solar Project

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service operates seven fish hatcheries in the Southwest region. Each has a different purpose and breeds a different species of fish.

There are hatcheries that breed endangered species, hatcheries that breed sportfish, and fish technology centers that focus on scientific discovery.

President Barack Obama mandated in 2009 that all federal agencies have significant reductions in petroleum use, increased recycling, decreased water use, and, and increased efficiency in new building construction.

Fish hatcheries, by their natures, use a lot of energy and water. Recovery Act funds have started the S.W. region on its goal to environmental sustainability.

From the regional headquarters in Albuquerque, the S.W. Region's assistant director of fisheries, Mike Oetker says that energy reduction is one of his major priorities.

The legacy that I want to leave behind is a system that's capable of handling a myriad of natural resource issues facing this area; water, energy...I want to leave this place better than I found it. And that means we're able to conserve more water, to use it more efficiently, to generate our own electricity, here to offset what we're using. To become independent in a way in how we deal with the resource issues in this area of the country.

The service operates two hatcheries in New Mexico. Dexter National Fish Hatchery and Technology Center outside of Roswell, and Mora National Fish Hatchery in the mountains of Northern New Mexico.

Oetker says that the USFWS is doing its part to meet and exceed federal guidelines for energy reduction by 2020.

As we heard about the carbon-neutral initiative, we know that the fisheries program is intensive use of water. To move water through the pumps and the different aquatics programs that we have is pretty energy intensive.

Here In the dessert southwest, there are two main issues that we deal with; one is water and the other is climate change. As the country warms, things will change, and so it's our part in all of this to really reduce the amount of energy that we're using; our amount that we're contributing to climate change.

Retrofitting the different facilities for energy efficiency comes with totally unique challenges. Dexter is an indoor-outdoor facility built in the 1940's. It is an indoor-outdoor warm water hatchery that hatches 16 different species of fish, at a total of almost 1.7 million per year. Efficiency has been the focus of

Dexter conservation as the service has made the Dexter facility more efficient by replacing old and outdated materials, windows, and doors.

Mora is a state-of-the-art indoor facility built in 1997. It is responsible only for the endangered Gila trout, of which it takes hatches over 10,000 per year.

It recycles over 95% of the 93 million gallons of water it uses daily. Thanks to a green award-winning water re-circulation system.

Oetker is also proud of a major solar project that will allow the Mora facility to produce its own energy.

Once we reduce all of that energy usage, then we can focus our effort on building the capacity to generate our own energy through solar panels; so very shortly, we have just awarded a project to a company here in New Mexico where they're going to come out and build solar panels on top of the building behind me. And we'll be able to generate our own electricity here and offset carbon-producing electricity.

With the help of recovery act funding, the USFWS is becoming a leader in resource conservation in supporting the administration's sustainability goals.