

FEATURED FACILITY

Dexter National Fish Hatchery and Technology Center

Where: Dexter, New Mexico

When: Established 1932

Then:

Dexter National Fish Hatchery was established to culture catfish and largemouth bass for farm ponds.

Now:

In the “land of enchantment” lies a man-made haven for desert-dwelling fish. Dexter National Fish Hatchery and Technology Center near storied Roswell, New Mexico, is a New Deal-era facility. Shortly after the passing of the Endangered Species Act in 1973, priorities shifted from farm pond fish. Now the facility provides a safe harbor for 16 threatened or endangered fish species native to the American Southwest.

Roswell residents know about alien visitors. So do fish like the Big Bend gambusia and Comanche Springs pupfish, held at Dexter. Nonnative fishes caused their numbers to decline in the wild. Endangered fish conservation expanded at Dexter in the 1980s, when imperiled fishes from the Colorado River arrived on station: the razorback sucker, bonytail, and Colorado pikeminnow.



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Dexter's Molecular Ecology Lab manager, Sherri Baker, prepares a genetic test on the endangered Clear Creek gambusia, a rare fish found only in Texas.

Dexter became a Technology Center in 1991. Now, the 78-year-old facility is infused with leading-edge technology used by scientists to conserve imperiled fishes. Dexter is home to a molecular ecology and conservation genetics laboratory; the Regional Fish Health Center; and a physiology and pathobiology laboratory. ♦ Connie Keeler-Foster, Ph.D.