

California Department of Water Resources NEWS

August 19, 1999

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Feather River Fish Hatchery Expanded Made More Visitor Friendly

OROVILLE -- Work recently completed at the Feather River Fish Hatchery has improved conditions for the rearing of fish and made it easier for visitors, including those with disabilities, to observe hatchery operations.

The major benefit to hatchery operations is that the hatchery, operated by the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) with funding from DWR and the State Water Project Contractors, now has the necessary quarantine facilities on site to raise salmon for planting in Lake Oroville.

To guard against the fall-run chinook earmarked for Lake Oroville becoming diseased, DFG previously took eggs at the Feather River hatchery, but hatched out and raised the fish for several months at Silverado Fisheries Base, a DFG hatchery and quarantine facility in Napa. After DFG pathologists certified the fish as disease free, they were trucked back to the Feather River hatchery prior to planting in Lake Oroville. Raising the fish entirely at the Feather River Fish Hatchery will eliminate potential losses from the loading/handling stress associated with trucking.

A new ultraviolet water treatment system at the hatchery delivers disinfected water to two new fish-rearing raceways (and to the hatchery's older raceways), as well as to a new hatchery building.

The fall-run chinook planted in Lake Oroville, the State Water Project's largest reservoir and a popular destination for anglers, are only some of the fish produced at the Feather River Fish Hatchery.

In 1998, before expansion, the hatchery produced:

- 450,000 fall-run chinook for Lake Oroville.
- 350,000 fall-run chinook for other California reservoirs.
- 7,794,457 fall-run chinook for the Feather River.
- 1,804,060 spring-run chinook for the Feather River.
- 434,422 steelhead for the Feather River.

(Hatchery salmon earmarked for the Feather River are planted in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta near Crockett and eventually return to the Feather River and the hatchery. Hatchery steelhead are planted in the Feather River at Gridley and Live Oak and eventually migrate to the Pacific Ocean. After one to three years, the majority of these steelhead return to the Feather River Fish Hatchery.)

The recently completed expansion projects provide the Feather River Fish Hatchery with enough additional rearing space to raise several hundred thousand more chinook salmon for Lake Oroville, which also features excellent fishing for bass, trout, catfish and other fish.

Providing the hatchery with the capability to raise chinook salmon from eggs to juveniles for stocking Lake Oroville meets requirements of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), the licensor of DWR's Oroville hydroelectric facilities. Construction of the fish-rearing improvements began in the fall of 1998 and was completed in April, 1999.

In addition to expanding and improving the hatchery, DWR has made it easier for visitors, especially those with disabilities, to move around the complex and view the fish-rearing facilities and fish ladder.

New curb ramps, ramps to viewing areas, guardrails and handrails, and remodeled lavatory facilities are among improvements. The improvements meet or exceed standards set by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.

"We have had wonderful phone calls from people saying how helpful the improvements are," said Anna Kastner of DFG, assistant manager of the hatchery.

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The Department of Water Resources operates and maintains the State Water Project, provides dam safety and flood control and inspection services, assists local water districts in water management and

water conservation planning, and plans for future statewide water needs. The State Water Project provides water to two-thirds of California's population.

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