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## ENNIS NATIONAL FISH HATCHERY, MONTANA RESTORING AMERICA'S FISHERIES

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# Ennis National Fish Hatchery, Montana

## *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.

### **Ennis National Fish Hatchery**

Established in 1931, Ennis NFH was located for the purpose of taking trout eggs from wild populations, and introducing fingerling fish back into public waters to sustain and enhance the sport fishery. The site was selected for the fractured rock out-cropping which gravity flows 15,000 gallons per minute of 54°F spring waters; the ideal environment for producing trout.

In the 1970's the demand for catchable trout decreased, but the demand for eggs increased. More emphasis was placed on broodstock and by the mid-80's production exceeded 20 million eggs. Today, Ennis NFH operates as a federal broodstock hatchery and produces over 20 million rainbow trout eggs annually.

In fiscal year 2000, eyed eggs from 6 strains of rainbow trout were provided to Federal, State, and Tribal hatcheries, fish technology centers, and research facilities in 26 states.

Ennis NFH continues to be whirling disease free, and recent construction to cover the springs ensures its continued disease-free status.

### **What is a Broodstock Hatchery?**

Broodstock are adult fish that produce eggs and sperm. A broodstock hatchery specializes in rearing fish to adult size, then taking the eggs from those fish, fertilizing the eggs with sperm, incubating the eggs through the fragile early stages, and shipping them to production hatcheries where

they are hatched and the fish are raised to stockable sizes.

Ennis NFH is the largest facility in the Service's National Broodstock Program, and is one of only two rainbow trout broodstock hatcheries in the nationwide Federal hatchery system. To meet the trout production demands, Ennis NFH facilities include 38 hatchery tanks, 48 circular tanks, and 36 raceways.

6 different strains of rainbow trout are reared at Ennis NFH, each strain being named for their original location:

- McConaughy (Nebraska)
- Eagle Lake (California)
- Shasta (California)
- Fish Lake (Utah)
- Erwin (Tennessee)
- Arlee (Montana)

As a result of the Ennis NFH Broodstock program, economic benefits weigh-in at 5 million angler days and generates \$50 million per year in 26 states.



*Ennis National Fish Hatchery;  
USFWS*



*Eagle Lake strain trout eggs on screen  
just before being put down in tank;  
USFWS*

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

Ennis NFH helps in many ways! Currently, the hatchery produces trout eggs to fill production hatchery needs throughout the nation. These fish help to replenish and encourage sustainable trout populations and provide angling opportunities for recreational users like you!

As the natural aquatic habitat changes from *natural* (drought, flood, habitat destruction) or *human* (over-harvest, pollution, habitat loss due to development and dam construction) influences, the natural production of fish 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 7 days a week, Ennis NFH welcomes visitors to the hatchery for a closeup view of the fish production process. With over 3,000 visitors annually, the dedicated staff at the hatchery will normally be available to answer your questions. Educational programs/tours are provided for the public and school groups when scheduled in advance.

There is a small visitor center in the building, and an outside display pond with rainbow trout weighing over 20 pounds. 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.

### **Supporting Our Communities**

Ennis NFH is a proud participant in the local communities. As part of the outreach program, the hatchery stocks the Ennis Kids Pond for National Fishing Week and provides educational prizes for participants. The hatchery also supports local schools and groups with educational material on fish and endangered species.

Additionally, the hatchery stocks retired broodfish into waters of Montana and Colorado where they will not interfere with endangered fish or wildlife and will give anglers the chance to test their skills landing big fish. Retired broodfish are also donated to the Horsebutte Wildlife Rehab Center as food for eagles and ospreys.

Ennis NFH is located in Madison County, 12 miles southwest of Ennis, along the northeastern foothills of the Gravelly Range. Come prepared for a day of fun!



*Hatchery employees Dave Noble and Jim McFall holding a pair of Shasta strain  
rainbow trout broodstock; USFWS*