

WHY A HATCHERY?

Before the dams were built and the rivers tamed...

Before the increasing human use of the streams and their water...

Salmon and steelhead returned from the ocean to the river of their birth, to renew the cycle of life. In the ocean, they found a rich source of food. In the cool running streams of the American River and its tributaries, they found a safe habitat for their young.

The completion of the Nimbus Dam (1955) and Folsom Dam (1956) prevented salmon and steelhead from reaching most of their historic spawning areas. The Bureau of Reclamation, which operates the dams, built and funds the Nimbus Fish Hatchery to lessen the impacts of the loss of spawning habitat and to help sustain salmon and steelhead populations.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife operates the hatchery, annually producing 4.5 million Chinook salmon and almost half a million steelhead trout.

ABOUT US

Visiting Hours

For Visitor Center hours, please check our website or call the number below. Access to the river and the river trail is open sunrise to sunset. The gate to the parking area closes at 3pm, yet still opens to exiting vehicles after that time.

Fish Ladder

Water runs in the fish ladder when conditions are appropriate for egg-taking. The ladder usually opens around the first week of November for salmon and flows until the steelhead season ends in February. The gate at the base of the ladder is often closed to prevent overcrowding, which would deplete oxygen in the water and can prove fatal to the fish. Exact times when the gate will be open are not announced.

Egg-Taking

You may watch the egg-taking process through the viewing windows in the Visitor Center. Call the information number below for the spawning schedule and other details.

Guided Tours

Guided tours for school and community groups are available by request and require at least 15 people in a group. Self-guided tours are available year-round and there are staff and volunteers on-site to answer questions. The numbered map can be used as a guide as you explore the hatchery grounds. Visit the website below for details.

Contact Us

916-358-2884

wildlife.ca.gov/Fishing/Hatcheries/Nimbus

www.facebook.com/NimbusHatchery/



A VISITOR'S GUIDE TO THE NIMBUS FISH HATCHERY

Chinook Salmon and Steelhead Trout

Welcome to Nimbus Fish Hatchery

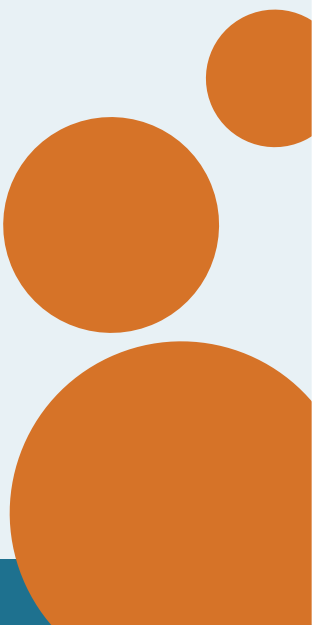
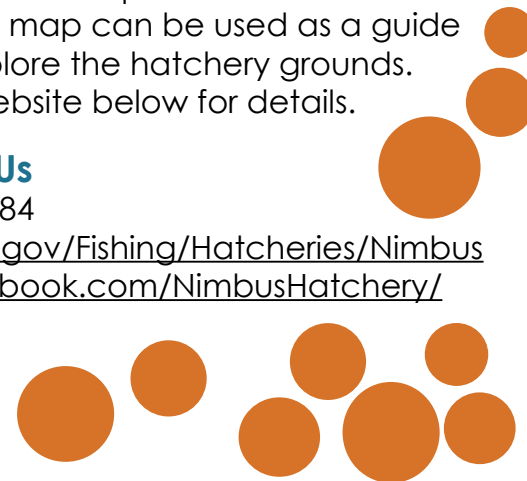
No matter what time of year you visit, the Nimbus Fish Hatchery offers a glimpse into the unique world of salmon and steelhead.

Fall marks the return of Chinook salmon and the opening of the fish ladder. Winter brings sleek steelhead trout. Throughout the year, you can explore the exhibits of the Visitor Center, stroll the River Discovery Trail, or feed the young fish at Nimbus or the adjacent American River Trout Hatchery.

This is a working hatchery, so chances are that you will see the staff involved in some of the many tasks needed to raise over four million salmon and close to a half million steelhead each year.

Enjoy your visit!

CDFW Staff Photo by G. Gilmore



NIMBUS FISH HATCHERY

1 VISITOR CENTER

Enjoy learning about the biology of salmon, hatchery operations, and river conservation through interactive exhibits in the Visitor Center. During salmon and steelhead season, watch egg-taking on the spawning deck through the viewing window. Salmon eggs are collected several times a week, usually in the morning (early-November through mid-December). Steelhead egg-taking occurs once a week (January through February).

2 HOLDING PONDS

At the top of the ladder, fish push through a one-way gate to enter the front holding pond, which offers visitors close-up views of these spectacular fish. The crowder, a metal gate on wheels, is used to move the fish into the tranquilizing lift basket in the spawning deck. Salmon with immature eggs and sperm are placed into holding ponds parallel to the building until they are ready to spawn.

3 AMERICAN RIVER TROUT HATCHERY

This adjacent hatchery raises rainbow trout, Lahontan cutthroat trout, and kokanee salmon, which are stocked in over 250 lakes and streams across northern and central California for recreational fishing. This hatchery is funded through the sales of fishing licenses and operated by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

4 RIVER DISCOVERY TRAIL

This fully accessible ¼ mile trail follows the edge of the American River and provides opportunities to watch the seasonal spawning of salmon and steelhead. Keep an eye out for the wide-range of migratory and resident birds living here. Mule deer, river otter, and coyote also call this area home. Water conservation and your responsible use of the river protect salmon, steelhead, and a wide array of river wildlife.

5 USGS CABLE

Here, you will see a large metal cable that spans the American River. On a regular basis, scientists from the United States Geological Survey (USGS) use this cable car to access



the river to measure the water conditions. This also serves as a marker for anglers to ensure fishing occurs downstream only. Preserving the upstream area from angling allows fish a safe place to spawn. During salmon and steelhead spawning season, a large number of birds, such as California gulls and double-crested cormorants, perch on the cable. They often know the salmon have returned before we do!

6 OBSERVATION DECK

The viewing platform offers a magnificent view of the river and a chance to see salmon and steelhead actively building their nests, or redds. If you look down at the bank, there is a outflow of water that stems from the settling ponds behind you. The wastewater that comes from the hatchery raceways is filtered by sand and gravel to ensure it is clean before it reaches the river.

7 FISH LADDER

The overwhelming instinct to swim upstream draws salmon and steelhead to the hatchery from the river by way of the fish ladder. Each step is a small jump for these powerful fish. Water flows in the ladder when conditions are right for spawning (usually early November through February). The gate at the ladder's base is often closed to prevent overcrowding at the top of the ladder.

8 VIEWING WINDOWS

Get an underwater look at the salmon and steelhead swimming upstream towards the hatchery. The viewing windows provide a unique chance to observe the characteristics that differentiate male and female fish, as well as salmon and steelhead.

9 RACEWAYS

Salmon grow in these ponds until they are ready to make the transition to ocean waters at about six months old (4 to 5 inches long). Steelhead remain in the raceways for a year before they are released (8 to 10 inches long). The netting above the raceways protects them from fish-eating predators. When the fish are ready to be released, they are pumped into special tanker trucks and driven to their release sites. We provide free food to feed fish in the raceways. Check signs in the Visitor Center or ask Visitor Center personnel for specific times and fish feeding details.

10 SUPER SALMON PLAYSCAPE

Designed specifically for human "small fry," this fully accessible play structure allows children to get up-close and personal with a salmon and their eggs. Shade canopies and a river-themed bench make this a favorite spot for a rest or a picnic lunch.